

## Golden Sands & Majestic Forts (21 Days/ 20 Nights)

Delhi-Agra-Fatehpur Sikri-Jaipur-Pushkar-Shahpura-Bundi-Bardoli-Bhainsrorgarh-Chittorgarh-Devigarh-Udaipur-Devigarh-Narlai-Jodhpur-Khimsar-Jaisalmer-Bikaner-Mandawa-Nawalgarh-Delhi

Folklore of heroism and romance resound from the formidable monuments that majestically stand to tell the tale of a bygone era. The magic of vibrant Rajasthan - its rich heritage, colourful culture, exciting desert safaris, shining sand-dunes, amazing variety lush forests and varied wildlife - makes it a destination nonpareil. Rajasthan is often portrayed as one vast open-air museum, with its relics so well preserved that it delights even the most skeptical traveler. It is an incredible destination for the outdoor-tourist – take a safari on horses, camels, elephants or even in jeeps, with the Aravalis - India's oldest mountain range as the backdrop. Feast your eyes on spectacular sand-dunes, take the tiger trail, or just watch the birds in the wetlands. You can also choose to pamper yourself in the lavish heritage properties. Rajasthan has something for everyone – one just has to choose an activity appropriate to one's temperament.

### Day 1: Delhi

Upon arrival, after clearing immigration and custom's, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. (Check-in time at hotel is 1200 noon) Afternoon, visit New Delhi: Our tour of New Delhi includes visits to such sights as the Qutab Minar 72 meters high and one of the most perfect towers in the Persian world. The Iron Pillar which has survived the vagaries of weather for over 1500 years. Continue with a drive through Embassy area, the Government buildings (1921-1930.) Overnight at hotel.



### Day 2: Delhi

Following breakfast, visit Old Delhi: An ancient walled city. Here you will drive past Red Fort, the most opulent Fort and Palace of the Mughal Empire: Raj Ghat, the memorial site of the Mahatma Gandhi; Jama Masjid, the largest mosque in India; and Chandni Chowk, the bustling and colourful market of the old city. Rest of the day at leisure Overnight at hotel.



### Day 3: Delhi - Agra

After Breakfast leave for Agra. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel. Afternoon, visit Agra City: Agra is not only famous for Taj Mahal but the impressive Mughal Red Fort known as the Agra Fort. This impressive red sandstone fort was built by Akbar between 1565-1573 A.D. Replete with gateways, pillared halls, mosques, marble trellises and geometric gardens; the Fort represents Mughal architecture at its peak. Overnight at hotel.



### Day 4: Agra - Fatehpur Sikri - Jaipur

Following breakfast, visit Taj Mahal: is the medieval city of the famous 17th century masterpiece Taj Mahal, which of course is the most splendid of all buildings - perhaps, the most perfect architectural monument in the world. It was built in the memory of the beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal of one of the greatest kings Shah Jehan of the Mughal Empire. (TAJ MAHAL CLOSED ON FRIDAYS). After visit, drive to



Jaipur en-route visit Fatehpur Sikri: (ghost capital) for a tour of these magnificent and world heritage buildings, which are still in a state of perfect preservation. The city is divided into religious and secular sections. The profusion of sculpture is breathtaking. Also, the white marble mosque in the secular section is incredible. It is a very sacred mosque and pilgrims from far and near arrives here to pay their respects. After visit, continue your drive to Jaipur. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel. Overnight at hotel.

#### Day 5: Jaipur

Following breakfast, visit Amber Fort, ascent to the fort on Elephant / Jeep ride the former capital of the royal Rajputs. Few fail to be moved by the dramatic Rajput grandeur of this hilltop fortress-palace 11-km north of Jaipur. Set on the dry wrinkled Aravali Hills, and surrounded by fortified battlements, the palace straddles two sepia-hued tundra hills overlooking Maota Lake, and its sprawling



crenellated walls lattice the surrounding hills. We will ride up to this hilltop palace on a caparisoned, painted elephant, passing through the ancient main gate where Maharajas of Jaipur have entered for four hundred years. Our guide will elaborate on the history of this architectural masterpiece with its mirror-studded alcoves, dazzling mosaics and water-cooled swings that delight today's visitors as they did their former royal residents. Afternoon, visit Jaipur City: Hawa Mahal or Palace of the Winds, a five-storied structure of pink sandstone with semi-octagonal and delicately honeycombed windows overlooking the main street of the old city. It was built in 1799 so that veiled royal woman could peer down unseen by the world through its 593 stone screens. We proceed for a guided tour of the City Palace & Observatory. The City Palace in the heart of the old city is a blend of Rajasthani and Mughal architecture. The center of the palace is a seven storied building called Chandra Palace, with fine views over the gardens and the city. Next top the City Palace is the Solar Observatory - an astronomical treasure house, with solar device that gives accurate predictions till date. Overnight at hotel.

#### Day 6: Jaipur - Pushkar - Shahpura

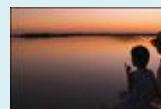
Following breakfast, drive to Shahpura enroute visiting Pushkar. Pushkar, an important religious place for Hindus. This little town is hugely known for the "Pushkar Fair (where the mass trading of camels takes place), "the Lord Brahma Temple", a "picturesque lake Pushkar houses as many as 400 temples and 52 ghats, which includes the Brahma temple, the only temple dedicated to Lord Brahma in the



country. Pushkar is amongst the important pilgrimages in the country visited by devotees from all over the country, Varah Temple The Varah Temple is devoted to the Lord Vishnu, Savitri Temple. This temple is devoted to the Goddess Savitri, one of Brahmas wives, and is located on the highest hill above the Pushkar town. Pushkar Lake is said to have been created by the falling of lotus from the hand of Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe. It is believed to be as old as the creation. The lake is one of the most holy spots in the town, and it is said that a single dip in the waters of lake on Kartika Poornima is same as performing yagnas for several hundred years. Continue your drive to Shahpura. Overnight at hotel.

#### Day 7: Shahpura

Morning leisurely breakfast and later visit Shahpura: There's a lot to do for the outdoor enthusiast. The Shahpura region has a rich varied landscape dotted with many man-made lakes, rustic original quaint villages and friendly innocent people un-spoilt by modernity. Long warm days in the sun and fresh air alongside lakes teeming with wild fowl remind you of earlier carefree days of youth.



Whether you are drifting away in a boat surrounded by reeds, day dreaming on a comfortable charpoy at the farm, or just taking in the rural scenery, staying here will bring you the joys of "the simpler life of bygone ages. Evening at leisure. Overnight at Hotel.

#### Day 8: Shahpura - Bundi - Bardoli - Bhainsrorgarh

Following breakfast, drive to Bhainsrorgarh en-route visit Bundi: The 14th century Taragarh Fort is a famous attraction of Bundi. It is resplendent in white, with a big gateway, battlement and a rock reservoir. The Bundi Palace next to the fort has some beautiful murals on display. At Chhattar Mahal of the many splendid structures the ancient water clock at Hathi Pol and the beautiful



Diwan-e-Aam are a must see. The stables at Ratan Daulat offer a glimpse into medieval Rajputana lifestyle. After visit, continue your drive to Bhainsrorgarh en-route visit Bardoli: At Bardoli, you can find the oldest and the most beautiful temple complex of Rajasthan. In addition, a visit to the town of Menial after monsoons presents you with one of the rare sights in the desert region & the waterfall. After visit Bardoli, continue your drive to Bhainsrorgarh. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel BHAINSRORGARH FORT. Overnight at hotel.

#### Day 9: Bhainsrorgarh - Chittorgarh - Devigarh

Following breakfast, visits the 250 year old Bhainsrorgarh Fort: is one of the most spectacular palaces in Rajasthan, built on a 200 foot cliff overlooking the wide River Chambal. In 2007, the palace was opened as a heritage hotel, with just 5 rooms providing a wonderfully characterful and unique place to stay with very personal service. Bhainsrorgarh itself is a small walled village,



and the area around here is unspoilt by mass tourism. Bhainsrorgarh is a great base for exploring the surrounding villages and learning about the local tribal lifestyles. Just 15 minutes drive away; the Baroli Temples are an outstanding example of 8th century Hindi architecture in a peaceful setting, while the newly opened Mukund Dara National Park offers the chance of seeing wildlife in a scenic and unspoilt setting. After visit, drive to Devigarh en-route visit Chittorgarh: Images of love and valour; scars of battles lost and won.... thrice -besieged, Chittorgarh Fort is situated on an area of 280 hectares, on the summit of a hill that rises to a height of 180 meters. The Chittorgarh Fort was besieged thrice and suffered devastation losses. The first attack was by Allaudin Khilji in 1303. He is believed to have fallen in love with the beautiful Rani Padmini and sought to possess her. As the siege proceeded the defenders realized they could not hold out. The men armed themselves and rode out to seek death on the battlefield, while Rani Padmini and the women immolated themselves in the Rajput tradition of Jauhar. The next siege took place in 1533 when Bahadur Shah of Gujarat attacked Chittorgarh Fort. The last siege was by the Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1567. Each of these sieges caused tremendous loss of life among the brave defenders of Chittorgarh. After visit, continue your drive to Devigarh. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel DEVIGARH PALACE. Overnight at hotel.

#### Day 10: Devigarh - Udaipur - Devigarh

Following breakfast, visit Eklingji & Nagda. Eklingji: 4 miles south of Devigarh the village of Kailashpuri which is known for its 108 temples surrounded by a high fortified wall, the whole complex is known as Sri Eklingji temple and has been a holy site associated with Lord Shiva since ancient times. The present structure however, dates from the 16th century. Nagda: Close to



Kailashpuri down a rough country road is believed to have been established by Nagaditya the fourth Mewar king a descendant of the Guhadatta who was born in a cave in the Aravali mountains. There are several temples dating back to the fourth century A.D. Afternoon, visit Udaipur City: In the midst of this romantic fate ridden land you come Udaipur, beautiful city of lakes, palaces and fountain. In the shadows of dark green hills, Udaipurs three lakes - Pichola, Fateh Sagar and Udai Sagar are shimmering jewels from the opal surfaces of which rise fairytale white palaces. Maharana Udai Singh sought shelter here from the Mughal hordes and then tarried to fashion a city out of the silent vale. Visit the City Palace Museum - grandeur and intricacy stroked all over in Granite, Marble and Mosaic displayed in the sparkling white filigreed balconies and windows, ornate arches and cupolas atop magnificent octagonal towers, Jagdish Temple - built in 1651 A.D. Also visit Sahelion Ki Bari - the spectacular garden displaying the unique life style of the royal ladies who once lived in the palace. Evening exclusive boat ride on Lake Pichola: Lake Pichola: Fringed with hills, gardens, havelis, ghats and temples, Lake Pichola is the scenic focus of Udaipur. Set in it are Jag Niwas and Jag Mandir Palaces. Overnight at hotel.

#### Day 11: Devigarh - Narlai

Following breakfast, drive to Narlai en-route visit Ranakpur: Famous for the quadruple Jain temple dedicated, like the temples at Mount Abu to Adinath. The whole structure has 80 domes and is of 400 pillars. After, visit, continue your drive to Narlai. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel. Overnight at hotel.



#### Day 12: Narlai

Following breakfast, visit Narlai: Narlai is a beautiful town surrounded by Aravalli Ranges and is located in Pali District, Rajasthan. This quaint little hamlet is dotted with beautiful old temples, step wells and marble archways. Narlai, situated at the base of a hillock, on the top of which is a colossal statue of an elephant, is a major Jain pilgrim center. The name



Narlai is derived from Narad. It is believed that saint Narada - a constant companion of Lord Vishnu, mediated on a hill which lies at the center of the village. Overnight at hotel.

#### Day 13: Narlai - Jodhpur

Following breakfast, Horse/Jeep ride at Narlai Village Later drive to Jodhpur. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel Raas Haveli. Evening at leisure. Overnight at hotel.



#### Day 14: Jodhpur

Following breakfast, visit Jodhpur: The home of the Rathore rulers - the princely state of Rajasthan. A high 10 kms long stone wall protects the well fortified city. Within, stands an imposing fort on a low range of sandstone hills, about 125 mts. above the surrounding plains. Visit Mehrangarh Fort - founded in 1459 A.D. by Rao Jodha (After whom the city is named)



the Fort is intricately adorned with long carved panels and latticed windows of exquisite designs in Red Sandstone. Also visit Jaswant Thada - an imposing white marble cenotaph built to commemorate the acts of bravery and generosity of the rulers in 19th century. Evening explore local Jodhpur Market. Overnight at hotel .

#### Day 15: Jodhpur - Khimsar

Following breakfast, drive to Khimsar. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel. Afternoon, visit Khimsar: It is the highlight of the town. The battle-scarred walls and turrets transport you to a bygone era. Different rulers added their own personal touch to the fort which resulted in interesting contrasts. The zenana or the Ladies Wing was constructed when the royal

family shifted to the fort and has intricately carved windows. Later, safari by jeep is a fast-growing adventure activity at Sand Dunes Village located 6 Km from Khimsar offers facilities for such safaris. Overnight at hotel .



#### Day 16: Khimsar - Jaisalmer

Following breakfast, drive to Jaisalmer en-route visit Osian: A temple town and old caravan serai on the edge of the Desert. Osian is a small town known for its temples. Though a small village now history confirms that Osian was once a large and prosperous city. So large in fact, that according to the local story, Osian at the height of its prosperity had its

grain market in the town. Osian was an important pilgrimage centre between the 8th and 9th centuries, apparent from the surviving Hindu temples of the Vaishnava, Saura (Sun) and Shakti (mother goddess) sects. Later, in spite of the rulers adoption of Jainism, Osian continued to attract Hindu devotees to its temple of the goddess Sachi Yamata (a folk transformation of Mahishasuramardini), still in use today. There are 15 brahminical temples and shrines, and a cluster of Jain temples, all built during the Gurjara Pratihara dynasty between the 8th and the 12th centuries: testimony to the significance of religion in the life of its people for 400 years. One group of 11 temples belonging to the early phase (8th-9th centuries), lies within and on the outskirts of the present-day village. The other group belonging to the 11th and 12th centuries is located on a hill overlooking the village. Though small, these temples are beautifully built and richly sculpted. A striking feature is the variety in their design. Each temple has its original design, planning and layout. After visit, continue your drive to Jaisalmer. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel RANGMAHAL. Overnight at hotel.



#### Day 17: Jaisalmer

Following breakfast, visit Jaisalmer City: The citadel city built in the 12th century is an architectural dream in yellow sandstone lying in the lonely silence of the Thar Desert, would provoke wonder, at what could have induced Jaisal, a Bhatti Prince, to settle right in the heart of a desolate desert. The forts and palaces and several superbly carved Jain

temples in and around Jaisalmer are all reminiscent of a gloriously history. From the balconies jutting out from either side of the lanes, almost touch overhead. Patwon ki Haveli, Nathmalji ki Haveli are some of the notable mansions. Evening excursion to Sam Desert: 40 kms from Jaisalmer are the Silver Gold Sand Dunes of Sam, as the sky is set on fire, and Rajasthani musicians play haunting tunes, can be an unforgettable experience. Overnight at hotel.



#### Day 18: Jaisalmer - Bikaner

Following breakfast, drive to visit Deshnok: The Karni Mata temple, 30 kms from Bikaner, is dedicated to an early fifteenth century mystic who was considered to be a reincarnation of goddess Durga. The especially of the temple is that it is inhabited by legions of brown rats which scurry around the complex without any fear. The rats are believed to be

repositories of the souls of dead charans, the traditional bards. Devotees offer milk, grains and sweets to these rats during the time to aarti. There are so many rats on the floor that people have to watch where they step. Sighting a white mouse is considered auspicious. It is believed that the Maharaja of Bikaner had a vision in which the goddess asked him to protect the rats and for this reason, there is bronze wire mesh across the temple. After visit, continue your drive to Bikaner. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel. Overnight at hotel.



#### Day 19: Bikaner - Mandawa

Following breakfast, visit Bikaner City - A desert fortified city on the ancient caravan routes that originated from Africa and West Asia. The fort, founded by Raja Rai Singh, is distinguished by its long range of 37 pavilions, a line of balconies. It also has windows of varying designs which lend it a graceful dignity. An enormous archway leads to



the Jormal temple in a spacious courtyard. Tar Mandir is the royal chapel where Royal weddings and births were once solemnised. After visit, drive to Mandawa. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel. Overnight at hotel.

#### Day 20: **Mandawa - Nawalgarh - Delhi**

Following breakfast, visit Mandawa: A small town in the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan with a unique medieval charm. The streets are lined with richly painted houses and each town is bustling with activity. Each home and small little castles are richly painted with Shekhawati paintings known for its uniqueness and rich colours are still



unimaginable that it could have been possible to exist during those old days. After visit, drive Delhi en-route visit Nawalgarh: is rightly referred to as the Open Air Gallery. There is art all around. Nawalgarh is renowned all over the world for its exquisitely painted havelis that are beautifully designed and carved. The havelis are the mansions that boast of the beautifully carved wooden gates and the painted walls. The ornate iron and brass fittings revealed the affluence of the owner of the haveli. The marvelous murals have been painted on both the sides of the walls. The paintings were further decorated with small pieces of mirror, gold and silver leaves. The religious nature of the people is revealed in the paintings that revolve around the themes for the life and times of Lord Krishna. In fact there are a range of topics that get covered on the walls of the havelis at Nawalgarh. The list of must visit havelis at Nawalgarh comprises of the Anandilal Poddar Haveli, Hem Raj Kulwal Haveli, Bhagton Ki Haveli, and Khedwal Bhavan. The traders and merchants constructed most of the havelis in the 18th century and the early 19th century. The business of silk and opium brought in a lot of wealth to the merchants. Later drive to Delhi. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel. Overnight at hotel.

#### Day 21: **Delhi**

In time transfer to international airport for your flight back home.

