

Into India with Charles Allen

4th March to 21st March 2010

An 18 day tour through the heart of ancient India

Mumbai (Bombay) – Aurangabad – Ellora – Ajanta – Maheshwar – Mandu – Bhopal – Sanchi – Orchha –
Khajuraho – Varanasi (Benares) – Delhi

In a country as inexhaustible as India the most romantic and instructive sites often lie off the beaten track. This tour has been specially designed for those keen to explore the real India and to savour its classical past. We see what lies beyond Jaipur and the Taj, delve into a past far richer than that of the Raj and the Mughals, and experience patterns of life, art and devotion that have defied the millennia.

The itinerary traverses the vast states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh on a journey deep into the heart of the subcontinent. From the Arabian Sea it conducts us over the rugged Western Ghats to the Deccan plateau and the lovely Narmada river (the peninsula's Rubicon), then across the central watershed to the meandering Betwa and Chambal tributaries of the Ganges, and so, at Varanasi, to the Ganges itself.

But it is also a journey in time, from the dawn-of-history Buddhist sites of Sanchi, Sarnath and Ajanta to the earliest Hindu monuments at Ellora, the sublime medieval temples of Khajuraho, the irresistibly romantic palaces of 16th – 18th century Mandu and Orchha, the Muslim/British heritage of Delhi, and the timeless other-worldly sanctity of Varanasi.

Historian, broadcaster and traveller Charles Allen was born in India in the last years of the British Raj, where five generations of his family had lived and served. Since returning to the sub-continent as a volunteer teacher in the late 1960s, he and his wife Liz have travelled frequently and extensively throughout India, the Himalayas and central Asia. Charles Allen is an acknowledged authority on British Indian and South Asian history, and in 2004 was awarded the Sir Percy Sykes Gold Medal by the Royal Society for Asian Affairs for his contribution to Asian studies. He is an active Fellow of the Royal Geographical and Royal Asiatic Societies, and an elected member of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, the Explorers Club and the Frontline Club. As an accomplished traveller, he has made many 'off-piste' journeys in remote corners since winning the Sunday Telegraph Traveller of the Year award in 1967. Between 1997 and 2001 he led three expeditions to far western Tibet to explore the ancient pre-Buddhist kingdom of Zhang-Zhung and has published over 21 books on the Indian sub-continent.

Day 1 Thursday 4th March London Heathrow to Mumbai

Depart from London Heathrow on British Airways flight BA139 at 1030 hours non stop to Mumbai.

Day 2 Friday 5th March Mumbai to Aurangabad – by air (B/D)

Arrive into Mumbai at 0045 hours local time and on arrival transfer to the **Ramada Plaza Palm Grove** at Juhu Beach. Remainder of morning at leisure.

This afternoon transfer to the Domestic Terminal for Jet Airways flight 9W3109 departing at 1825 hours and arriving in Aurangabad at 1925 hours. Stay at the **Taj Residency Hotel**.

Aurangabad, originally known as Khadke, is a spacious town situated on the Deccan Plateau and a popular base from which to visit the Ajanta Caves and the Ellora Caves Founded in 1610 by Malik Ambar, an Abyssinian slave who later rose to be Prime Minister to the King of Ahmadnagar, the city later changed its name to Aurangabad in honour of the last great Mughal ruler Aurangzeb who built a new citadel in the town in 1692 and whose wife lies buried in a prominent white mausoleum said to have been built in imitation of the Taj Mahal.

Day 3 Saturday 6th March Visit Ajanta (B/L/D)

This morning drive 110kms to the Ajanta Caves which precede those at Ellora and date from about 200 BC to 650 AD and are cut from the volcanic lavas of the Deccan Trap and form part of a steep wooded hillside deep in the Sahyadri Hills. Lost from the 7th Century AD and rediscovered in 1819 by a party of British army officers on a tiger hunt these Buddhist rock-cut caves contain some of the finest examples of Indian painting and have since been compared to the frescoes of Assisi, Sienna and Florence.



Once a monastery and home to over 200 monks, artists, craftsmen and labourers the designs, principally figure compositions and floral and conventional decorative designs, that adorn the cave walls retell the life story of Buddha and uncover the life and culture of the inhabitants present at the time of their creation. The paintings, among other things, detail such widely varying subjects as the royal court, family life, street scenes as well as wildlife studies and it is this clarity and beauty, as well as their age, which makes them so important. The caves consist of two parts, Chaityas (chapels) and Viharas (monasteries), and out of the 29 caves the principle paintings can be found in 1, 2, 16, 17 and 19.

In the afternoon return to your hotel in Aurangabad.

Day 4 Sunday 7th March Aurangabad (B/L/D)

Today visit the Ellora Caves which are situated 26kms from Aurangabad. Originally located on an ancient trade route between Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh and the west coast of India the caves are thought to be the work of pilgrims, monks and merchants who used this route. As at Ajanta, the site was scarcely known until its rediscovery in the 19th century. But whereas Ajanta's caves are world famous for their pictorial art, Ellora's exhibit such variety of form and such skill in stone-cutting as to appear more buildings than caves. Yet all are cut from the same ridge of solid rock, including the free-standing Kailasanatha, a cathedral-size temple complete with statuary, sanctum and quite unnecessary architectural devices. Probably the largest monolithic 'building' in the world, it dates from the 8th century AD and is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Most of the caves are Hindu, though twelve of the earliest (c 600 AD) are Buddhist and seven Jain. Sectarian differences were commonly accommodated in a single site, which convinced modern India's founders that a spirit of religious tolerance, or 'secularism', was a feature of the national character

Day 5 Monday 8th March Aurangabad to Maheshwar – 310kms (B/L/D)

Today continue to Maheshwar to stay for three nights at **Ahilya Fort** which is something to be remembered. Largely constructed in the late 17th Century, except for the Ahilyeshwar Temple, surrounding courtyard, façade and the steps to the ghats which were built in the early stages of the 19th Century, Ahilya Fort holds a commanding position high above the banks of the sacred Narmada River. Once the stronghold and capital of India's most revered female ruler, the saintly but highly capable Ahilya Bai Holkar of Indore, this converted fortress has little changed since the years of her rule. Built in 1766 and lately converted into a hotel, it is a typical example of the Maratha architecture of the period, has 11 rooms, each with private attached bathrooms, and offers dining either under the grand neem trees or on the terrace overlooking the beautiful river below.

Day 6 Tuesday 9th March Maheshwar (B/L/D)

Explore the fort and walk down to the riverside to the beautiful ghats where you can watch the daily rituals of the ordinary local villagers. Maheshwar is a town revered by followers of Lord Shiva and the most important temples worth visiting are the Kaleshwara, Rajarajeshwara, Vithaleshwara and the Ahileshwar. The town is also known for its *Maheshwar* saris and you may wish to learn more about this thriving local industry during your stay at Ahilya.



Day 7 Wednesday 10th March Maheshwar – visit Mandu (B/L/D)

Today visit Mandu (60kms from Maheshwar) a deserted city located across a broad hilltop and known for its fine Hindu and Muslim architecture. Mandu was known in the 15th century as the ‘City of Joy’ and was the magnificent capital of the central Indian kingdom of Malwa. Renowned for its fine Rajput and Muslim architecture Mandu also fostered the development of both Hindu and Jain art and literature. Fortified as early as the 6th Century, by 1261 AD Mandu was the capital of the Paramara kingdom and in 1305 fell under Muslim rule. As Mandu’s strategic importance grew, so grander buildings were constructed, including an entire ‘women’s city’. However by the end of the Mughal period the town was in decline and has been effectively abandoned ever since.

Day 8 Thursday 11th March Maheshwar to Bhopal – 230kms (B/L/D)

After breakfast leave Ahilya Fort and continue to Bhopal. The state capital of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal spreads over seven gently rolling hills, contains two artificial lakes and as a result has a spacious feel that is only enhanced by the pleasant parks, royal palaces and modern buildings. As with many Indian cities there is another face to Bhopal aptly highlighted with the frenetic Old City with its large mosques and packed alleyways as well as the over-crowded bustling and noisy commercial centre situated in the New Market area of TT Nagar. Named after its 11th Century founder Raja Bhoja, Bhopal has a long and colourful history. After being devastated many times by successive invaders in the 18th Century, Dost Mohammad Khan, an Afghan General serving the Mughals, rebuilt the city and created the beginnings of the modern city seen to this day. More recently, from 1857 to 1926, the city was ruled by a succession of Muslim women who initiated innovations including a postal system, railways and waterworks as well as a religious heritage which has meant Bhopal has retained a strong Muslim character. Stay for two nights at the **Jehan Numa Palace Hotel**.

imposing 17th Century building built on an uneven rocky ridge, and perfectly blends both Rajput and Mughal styles. Although deserted and in need of some restoration the palace is still extremely atmospheric and has a profusion of arches, ornamental screens, coloured tiling, wall paintings and numerous excellent views.

Day 12 Monday 15th March Orchha to Khajuraho – 175kms (B/L/D)

This morning drive to Khajuraho. Set in a rich well-watered agricultural plain, with the Vindhyan Hills as a backdrop, and miles from the nearest town, Khajuraho is home to some of India's most famous and renowned temples. Formerly the capital of the old kingdom of Jajhauri, Khajuraho's temples were built under the later Chandela Kings between 950 and 1050 AD but were lost for centuries until accidentally discovered by a British Army Engineer in 1839. Only 20 of the 85 original temples have survived but those that have are widely considered to be among the finest in India. The temples, constructed mostly out of sandstone from Panna and Ajaigarh, fall under three distinct groups and belong to two different religions, Brahmanism and Jainism. Not only do the temples strike a perfect balance between architecture and sculpture they are highly impressive and have well kept gardens. Stay for two nights at the **Chandela Hotel**.

Day 13 Tuesday 16th March Khajuraho (B/L/D)

Today enjoy a full day tour of the Eastern and Western Groups of temples where forthright sculptures celebrate the joy of life and love for which there is probably no equivalent in the world. The Kandariya Mahadeva Temple which is decorated with elaborate carvings and numerous beautiful sculptures is well worth exploring as is the Lakshmana Temple and the three Jain Temples of the Eastern Group which further serve to highlight the exceptional quality of this site. It was originally surrounded by lakes and waterways, vestiges of which remain and are currently being reinstated.



Day 14 Wednesday 17th March Khajuraho to Varanasi – by air (B/D)

Morning at leisure in Khajuraho. In the afternoon depart Khajuraho on Jet Airways flight 9W724 departing for Varanasi at 1325 hours. Arrive in Varanasi at 1410 hours and transfer to the **Gateway Ganges Hotel** for the next two nights.

Unquestionably India's holiest city, Varanasi is situated on the banks of the sacred River Ganges and is characterised by a maze of narrow alleys that wind behind the crowded waterfront ghats. The city is an image, an idea and a symbol of Hinduism's core principles and consequently has been a centre of learning and pilgrimage for over 2000 years. Principally associated with Hinduism Varanasi has a varied religious heritage. Considered holy by Jains, Buddha also visited the city in 500 BC and the Muslim influence was so strong that until the 18th Century Varanasi was known as 'Mohammadabad'. With its array of temples, palaces and crowded ghats, and with its promise of *moksha* (release from rebirth) for all who die here, it is not surprising that Varanasi is a major centre of pilgrimage, the most revered city on the Hindu map, and a place of such intense devotion that the visitor seldom comes away unmoved.

Day 15 Thursday 18th March Varanasi (B/L/D)

Today take an early morning boat ride on the Ganges to view the sunrise and witness the pilgrims who gather to perform their religious rituals along the banks of the river. As the misty sunshine clears the light and spectacle is quite spectacular then head off to explore the back lanes of the old city that pulse with life. Visit the Bharat Mata Temple and the Durga Temple, which dates from the 18th Century and is painted ochre red, before continuing to the nearby Tulsi Manas Temple situated in a peaceful garden and constructed from white marble. Additionally a visit will be made to the 'Golden' Temple built in 1777, instantly recognisable by its gold plated roof, as well as to the Benares Hindu University. In the afternoon drive 10kms northeast of the city to Sarnath one of the major centres of Indian Buddhism. Buddha preached his first sermon of enlightenment here 2500 years ago and once inside the enclosure visit the excavated stupas, the archaeological museum and the Mulgandhakuti Vihara Temple.



Day 16 Friday 19th March Varanasi to Delhi – by air (B/D)

Morning at leisure. In the afternoon depart Varanasi on Jet Airways flight 9W724 at 1440 hours and arrive in to Delhi at 1600 hours. Assistance on arrival and transfer to the **Taj Mahal Hotel** in New Delhi for two nights.

Day 17 Saturday 20th March Delhi (B/L/D)

Delhi is India's capital city. Old Delhi was the capital of Muslim India between the 17th and 19th centuries and there are many mosques, forts and monuments in this area that relate to India's Muslim history. New Delhi was purpose-built by the British as a colonial capital inaugurated in 1931. It is today one of the fastest growing cities in the world with a population estimated (censuses are out of date before they can be completed) in excess of 20 million.

Today's tour covers both New Delhi, the spacious capital built by the British that includes most of official Delhi (secretariat, parliament, embassies etc), and, in the morning, Old Delhi, its more chaotic Mughal counterpart. Built in the first half of the seventeenth century by Shah Jehan this old city is still a dense network of overcrowded homes, markets and endless alleyways dominated by the enormous Red Fort. Make your way to Chandni Chowk and enjoy this bustling thoroughfare of shops, craftsmen's workshops, mosques and temples. On the way visit Jama Masjid the largest mosque in India, commissioned by Shah Jehan and completed in 1656. Please remember to take

care of your personal possessions when walking through these busy streets and may we suggest that you leave your valuables in your hotel safe. From Chandni Chowk continue to the Red Fort with its imposing appearance and towering entrance.

After lunch continue to Humayun's tomb in New Delhi. The tomb, built in 1570, is of particular cultural significance as it was the first garden-tomb on the Indian subcontinent. It stimulated several major architectural innovations, culminating in the construction of the Taj Mahal. Isa Khan's Tomb is situated just outside Humayun's tomb. It was built to honour Isa Khan, the Afghan ruler who overthrew Humayun. Built in 1547, in an octagonal pattern, the tomb marked a turning point in north Indian architectural design, and went on to inspire countless works of art. Also visit the Qutb Minar complex housing an impressive 13th Century 72m victory tower.



Day 18 Sunday 21st March Delhi to London

Transfer to the airport for your return non-stop flight to London on BA142 departing Delhi at 0330 hours and arriving in to London Heathrow at 0715 hours local time on Sunday 21st March.

END OF SERVICES

The cost of the above itinerary will be as follows:

1. £4100.00 per person based on twin sharing accommodation and World Traveller Class travel with British Airways
2. Single Room Supplement £680.00 per person

You may also wish to consider upgrading your World Traveller flights with British Airways to World Traveller Plus or Club World as follows.

* The supplement, subject to availability, for World Traveller Plus would be £260.00 per person return. World Traveller Plus is a separate cabin, with fewer seats which provides a more spacious and relaxing environment. A wider seat with 38 inch legroom (compared to 31 inch in economy) and a good recline ensures you have a more comfortable flight.

* The supplement, subject to availability, for Club World would be £1350.00 per person return. Club World offers an armchair style seat and footstool that convert to a 6 foot flat bed – a contemporary and more personalised meal service offering greater choice and flexibility- personal video screen – 18kg hand luggage allowance.

We are a licensed bonded Inclusive Tour Operator (ABTA V5041, ATOL 2841). The above price is a fully inclusive price covering all our services and is fully guaranteed against any surcharge for any reason once your deposit has been paid.

If you would like to proceed with the booking, we will require a deposit of 15% of the total cost, and this can be paid by cheque or credit / debit card. We are pleased to accept credit cards (Visa, Amex and MasterCard) or debit card (such as Maestro or Delta) over the telephone if this is more convenient for you. Pettitts do not charge a supplement on deposit payments by credit cards; however, balance or full payment is subject to a 1.5% charge to cover the credit card issuers commission. There is no charge for any payment by debit card.

Pre-existing medical conditions / Disabled passengers

It is essential that you advise us before booking if you have any disability, pre-existing medical conditions or important dietary requirement that Pettitts should be made aware of before we accept responsibility for operating this itinerary to the countries named. We may request that you provide a letter from your doctor confirming your fitness to travel.

For your peace of mind...

If, within two weeks of your departure, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office issues a travel advisory advising against all, or non-essential, travel to a country where you are taking your holiday, Pettitts will do its best to offer you either a suitable alternative holiday or a full refund of all monies paid.

Please note...

If ten weeks or more before departure there are insufficient bookings for this tour to be viable, we might decide to cancel it and you would receive an immediate full refund.

Whilst we do not anticipate any major changes to this itinerary, Charles Allen at his discretion, may adjust it to suit local conditions at the time.

Driving times – on major roads between towns and cities we will average approximately 40kms per hour, whilst on poorly surfaced roads, approximately 30kms per hour. These averages can vary considerably according to local conditions at the time.

What's included...

- * The tour will be led by Mr Charles Allen together with the full time services of a tour escort and the services of local English speaking guides.
- * World Traveller class travel to and from India using the scheduled services of British Airways using Boeing 747 / 777 series aircraft. Once issued, flight tickets are restricted for use only on the dates specified in the itinerary and are non-refundable.

Please note that airlines are required by new laws to give border control agencies access to passenger data. Accordingly any information we hold about you and your travel arrangements may be disclosed to the customs and immigration authorities of any country in your itinerary.

- * Sightseeing and entrance fees.
- * Between places you will travel by air-conditioned coach and economy class flights using the scheduled services of the Jet Airways / Kingfisher Airlines as shown in your itinerary.
- * Accommodation as specified including hotel service charges and local taxes.
- * Meals as follows as indicated in the above itinerary:

B=Breakfast
L=Lunch
D=Dinner

- * All gratuities to drivers, porters and local guides in India.

Extras...

- * Travel insurance. It is a condition of your contract with Pettitts that every member of the party has full Travel Insurance which covers, specifically, medical treatment and emergency repatriation where appropriate, without any exclusion. Please note that we will need to know the name of your insurers, your policy number and their emergency contact number before commencement of your holiday.
- * Cost of visas. Visas are required for:

India – Visas for India must be arranged prior to travel, either by post or through a visa service company. Application forms will be sent at the time of booking.

- * Any expenses of a personal nature, such as drinks, telephone calls, laundry, camera/video camera fees, meals (other than specified) etc.

STAYING ON

Whilst in India, you may wish to take advantage and extend your stay. By combining your ideas with our knowledge and expertise we can help you to create your own personal extension that is tailored exactly to your requirements. As this tour ends in Delhi the options are almost limitless and we have detailed some suggestions below. Once you have formulated your ideas, or if you require some general or specific advice, please call us on **01892 515966** or simply send your ideas to pettitts@btconnect.com.

Experience the Himalayan countries of Nepal or Bhutan. Easily reach by air from Delhi, both offer beautiful landscapes and fascinating culture. Traditional and charming, the little visited Bhutan, in particular, is a hidden gem that has remained unchanged over the centuries.

Explore and extend your stay in North India by visiting Agra and the Taj Mahal. You may also wish to continue your journey to include the princely state of Rajasthan – famous for its many forts, opulent palaces and colourful Rajput history.

Wildlife in India is synonymous with the famous Corbett National Park. Nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas, Corbett is a 300kms drive north of Delhi and a four night stay here, with your time divided on the perimeter and inside the park, is an excellent way to observe the wildlife in its natural habitat.

Relax on the beaches of Goa or Kerala – both easily reached by air direct from Delhi. With a range of hotels to choose from both locations offer something for everyone and are an excellent way to end a tour. Time in Kerala could also be extended with a cruise on the backwaters.

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