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**TRAIN : The Deccan Odyssey**  
**JOURNEY : Darjeeling Mail (EASTBOUND)**  
**Journey Duration : Upto 15 Days**

### **DAY 1 MUMBAI**

Your voyage of discovery begins at Mumbai airport, where you will be met and transferred to the iconic five-star Taj Mahal Palace & Tower Hotel for a luxurious two-night stay.

This flagship Taj hotel offers you splendid views of the Arabian Sea and Gateway of India, alongside refined century-old hospitality. This legendary luxury hotel has played host to kings, dignitaries and eminent personalities from across the globe.

Deluxe Class guests will stay in the Tower Wing, Presidential Suite guests reside in the Palace Wing. An additional night may need to be purchased depending upon the arrival time of your flight on Day 1. (All meals today are at your own arrangements)

### **DAY 2 MUMBAI**

This morning in Mumbai we take a short cruise, weather permitting, to Elephanta Island, a lush island densely wooded with palm, mango and tamarind trees. The atmospheric and fascinating cave complex, which dates back to the 3rd – 5th century, was designed to honour the life of Lord Shiva, one of the most auspicious Hindu gods and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We return to the city for lunch at the famous seafood Trishna restaurant and in the afternoon you are free to explore Mumbai independently or visit one of the colourful local markets.

In the evening a welcome drinks reception is followed by dinner at your hotel where you can get to know your fellow Travellers who will share this remarkable Indian odyssey.

### **DAY 3 MUMBAI**

The compelling city of Mumbai is rich in culture and history. Today we visit the 'Dhobi Ghats', an intriguing outdoor laundry. The dhobi is a traditional laundryman who collects your dirty linen, washes it and returns it neatly pressed. The Ghats are the laundries where they practice this historic tradition. Our tour then takes in Fort Bombay and Gandhi's House, now turned in to a fascinating museum depicting his inspirational life. Lunch is served in a local restaurant.

Mid-afternoon sees us boarding our private train, the Deccan Odyssey, a perfect way to experience the colour, character and amazing diversity of India. Settle into your beautifully appointed private en-suite cabin and enjoy the hospitable atmosphere of the stylish Bar Lounge Car before experiencing fine Indian or western cuisine prepared by our on board chefs.

#### **DAY 4 UDAIPUR**

We spend a leisurely morning on board as the landscape and spirit of India unfolds before us.

We then have the opportunity to listen to a talk on Indian culture before arriving at Udaipur, known as the 'City of Lakes' or 'Venice of the East'. A beguiling tapestry of breathtaking lakes and opulently majestic palaces from the Rajput era await your discovery.

The afternoon is spent admiring the awe-inspiring beauty of the Lake Palace constructed entirely of marble, which sits on its own island in the shimmering waters of Pichola Lake, and visiting the medieval grandeur of City Palace.

#### **DAY 5 JAIPUR**

With a breakfast arrival into the capital of Rajasthan, the 'Pink City' of Jaipur overwhelms the senses as we embrace its rich and colourful past. This morning, we visit the Amber Fort and explore its breathtaking and ornate majesty, including the magnificent Hall of Mirrors.

After lunch in a local restaurant, we continue our exploration with a tour of the Jantar Mantar Observatory, the imposing and vast City Palace and the beautiful Hawa Mahal, or Palace of Winds. This delicately stunning, yet enduring monument is constructed entirely of pink sandstone and was built in 1799 to allow royal ladies to discreetly observe everyday life. Finally, if time permits, we explore a famous fabric market before returning to our train to refresh ourselves.

This evening, we dine in the elegant Rambagh Palace Hotel, originally built in 1835 and once the residence of the Maharaja of Jaipur. The palace retains its elaborate splendour, extravagantly decorated with hand-carved marble 'jalis' or latticework, sandstone balustrades, cupolas and 'chattris' or cenotaphs, and elaborate Mughal Gardens.

Ladies in Rajasthani costumes perform the traditional garlanding 'aarti' and 'tikka' ceremonies while the music of the "Shenai" welcomes you. A delightful display of fireworks is followed by a barbeque with the illuminated Palace as a stunning backdrop. The dinner will be served outdoor on one of lawns of the palace. A truly memorable end to a fantastic day in the Pink City.

## **DAY 6 DELHI**

One of the oldest cities in the world, Delhi is a bustling and vibrant city, famous for its traditional bazaars and street markets.

Our fascinating city tour in this pulsating metropolis takes in the Raj Ghat memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, the World Heritage Site of Humayun's Tomb, the first example of Mughal architecture in India, and the towering Indo-Islamic Qutab Minar, the tallest brick minaret in the world at 238ft (73m) which dates from 1368.

Tonight, we enjoy a sumptuous dinner on board our private train as we continue our journey across India.

## **DAY 7 FATEHPUR SIKRI & AGRA FORT**

After breakfast, we visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Fatehpur Sikri. Known as a 'ghost city' this red sandstone town was abandoned only shortly after being built due to lack of water in 1585.

This afternoon our journey takes us to Agra Fort, a magnificent structure that dominates the skyline and acted as the main residence for emperors of the Mughal Dynasty until 1638. Its red sandstone walls run for 2.5 km and contain many fairytale palaces and two beautifully preserved mosques.

## **DAY 8 TAJ MAHAL (AGRA)**

This morning is devoted to visiting the impossibly beautiful Taj Mahal, built entirely of white marble on the south bank of the Yamuna River and indisputably is the most famous building in the world.

Completed in 1648 by Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan, the Taj Mahal is a mausoleum for his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, and took 22 years and 20,000 artisan workers to complete.

Nowhere else on the planet will you experience such a poignant architectural statement dedicated to the enduring nature of human love and inspirational artistry.

## **DAY 9 VARANASI**

Varanasi simply has to be experienced to be understood. Our early morning arrival at Varanasi, one of India's most sacred and spiritual places, offers us the opportunity to discover what is believed to be the oldest continually inhabited city in the world.

Situated on the banks of the River Ganges this cultural and religious Centre, known as the City of Light and established between 3 – 5,000 years ago, is a focus for Hindu pilgrims who bathe in the sacred waters of the Ganges and perform funeral rites.

We are privileged to witness these time-honored ceremonies as we travel on a private river cruise. Our exploration of Varanasi is completed with a guided walk and rickshaw ride through the winding ancient streets, home to some 2,000 temples, of this remarkable city.

## **DAY 10 DARJEELING**

Today we leave the Deccan Odyssey at Siliguri as we embark on a spectacular journey to the hill station of Darjeeling, situated in the foothills of the Himalayas. Choose to travel either by bus (3-4 hours) or embark on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, itself listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which takes about 6 hours from Tindharia or 4 hours from Kerseong. Also known as the 'Toy Train' it is a 2ft (610mm) narrow-gauge railway.

Travelling through awe-inspiring scenery our locomotive zigzags and loops gaining height to reach the cooler air of India's most famous hill station. We climb to Ghum, which situated at 7,407 feet (2,258 metres) is the highest railway station in India, where snow-covered Mount Kanchenjunga (third highest in the world) dominates the skyline, before dropping into Darjeeling itself, first crossing the graceful loop at Batasia. A packed lunch is served on board the train before our arrival into colonial Darjeeling.

We have dinner in the Hotel Mayfair (or similar), where we will stay for three nights. Perched on a picturesque hill with beautiful views of the valley, the Mayfair is a heritage hotel that exudes old-world charm and quiet elegance.

## **DAY 11 DARJEELING**

We awaken to the breathtaking scenery of Mount Kanchenjunga and this morning we can ride the DHR up to Batasia Loop and Ghum, climbing over 600 feet during its 8km journey.

The senses reel as we experience the chaotic nature of roadside life, passing within inches of colourful shops, houses and enthralling monasteries.

Our afternoon tour of Darjeeling provides a wonderful opportunity to experience the elegant grandeur of colonial life, as well as the contrasting culture of a Tibetan Refugee Centre where there are shopping opportunities and an absorbing visit to the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute where we learn about some of the famous mountaineering expeditions.

## **DAY 12 DARJEELING**

This morning, weather permitting, we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to watch the sun rising over the snow-capped high peaks of the Himalayas rising majestically 200 miles away on the horizon. Your early morning trip to Tiger Hill is a fantastic experience that captures the very character of one of our planet's most overwhelming natural sights.

This afternoon we visit a local tea plantation in Darjeeling and sample the freshest cup of tea most of us are ever likely to taste!

## **DAY 13 DARJEELING TO KOLKATA**

After an English breakfast, we leave this tranquil haven to embark on a car transfer (4 hours approximately) from Darjeeling to Bagdogra Airport for a short one-hour commercial flight to Kolkata. As we travel down the mountain you will enjoy panoramic views of the extensive tea estates that unfurl around us as far as the eye can see.

On arrival we transfer to the five-star Taj Bengal hotel for a two-night stay, a landmark five-star hotel in downtown Kolkata. Prominent landmarks of Victoria Memorial, Royal Calcutta Race Course, Horticultural Gardens, National Library, Eden Gardens and the Alipore Zoological Gardens are all within walking distance.

## **DAY 14 KOLKATA**

Kolkata is a sensory delight and cultural extravaganza that is constantly evolving. After breakfast, we spend the day exploring and absorbing the many sights that comprise this enthralling city that was once India's capital until 1911.

Our tour includes a visit to the Victoria Memorial, one of the finest and most prominent buildings in Kolkata which houses a museum dedicated to the history of India.

We travel around Dalhousie Square, the bustling hub of English colonial power and trade during the two centuries of British rule. Our final stop is South Park Street Cemetery, an atmospheric and still space within the clamour of modern-day Kolkata.

In the evening, we say goodbye to our fellow travelling companions who have shared this remarkable journey with us at our Farewell Dinner on the garden terrace at the Taj Bengal hotel.

## **DAY 15 KOLKATA**

You will be transferred to Kolkata airport to begin your journey home.