Wattletree Garden Tours
North India
Himalayas, Sacred Punjab, Taj Mahal & the Royal Roads of Rajasthan
2028 Itinerary

Your highlights include

- Quality accommodation
- Himalayan culture
- Heart of Dalai Lama country
- Mughal gardens
- Golden Temple
- Taj Mahal
- Red Fort
- Pink City
- Hidden gems
- Great company!
- Great local guide
- Safe beautiful local cuisine
- Cultural events

Quick summary!

15 Nights / 16 Days

New Delhi • Chandigarh • Shimla • Dharamshala • Amritsar • Agra • Jaipur • Mandava • New Delhi

A journey through the many faces of Northern India — from the imperial avenues of Delhi and the Himalayan charm of Shimla to the Tibetan culture of Dharamshala, the spiritual splendour of Amritsar, the Mughal magnificence of Agra and the royal heritage of Rajasthan. This program has been designed for a small group with a comfortable pace, carefully selected accommodation, internal flights where they save significant travelling time, and a selection of experiences that go beyond conventional sightseeing.

Stopover option in Singapore to be advised when international flights are advised.

Full itinerary

DAY 1 – Saturday 8th January — ARRIVE IN NEW DELHI
Welcome to India
Arrive in New Delhi, where you will be warmly welcomed and assisted with a transfer to the hotel.
Settle into your hotel and relax after your international journey.
The evening is at leisure.
Overnight: Hotel Pride Plaza / Surya, or similar, New Delhi
Meals: — Dinner

DAY 2 — Sunday 9th January NEW DELHI, NEW DELHI ✈ CHANDIGARH

Old Delhi, Imperial Delhi & the Story of India's Capital.

After breakfast, begin your discovery of India's fascinating capital. Start in Old Delhi with a visit to Jama Masjid, one of India's most important historic mosques. Continue past the magnificent Red Fort, the great Mughal fortress that once served as the principal residence of India's emperors. After lunch, continue drive past India Gate, one of Delhi's most recognisable landmarks.
Visit Gandhi Smriti, associated with Mahatma Gandhi's final days, followed by Humayun's Tomb, one of the finest examples of early Mughal architecture and an important precursor to the Taj Mahal. Complete the day's sightseeing at Qutub Minar, Delhi's spectacular 12th-century monument. Later we will fly north to Chandigarh. On arrival in Chandigarh, meet your private coach and proceed to our hotel Hyatt, Chandigarh or similar.

Overnight: Hotel Hyatt, Chandigarh or Similar
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 3 — Monday 10th January CHANDIGARH to KALKA by bus → KALKA 🚂 SHIMLA

From India's Capital to the Himalaya.

After breakfast, we begin our day with a visit to Chandigarh's beautiful Rose Garden, home to an impressive collection of roses and seasonal flowers, followed by the fascinating Rock Garden, an extraordinary creation of sculptures and courtyards crafted from recycled materials.
Later, we transfer to Kalka Railway Station to board the Kalka–Shimla Himalayan Queen train, embarking on a scenic journey through the foothills of the Himalayas towards Shimla. The historic railway winds its way through picturesque valleys, forests and mountain landscapes, making the journey itself a memorable part of the experience. We will collect a packed lunch from Hyatt Chandigarh on the way to Kalka railway station as they do not serve any food on the train.
There will be clean English (sit down) toilet on board! Kalka–Shimla Heritage Toy Train
Scheduled departure: 11:55 hrs
Arrive in Shimla and transfer to our hotel. The evening is free to relax and enjoy the mountain atmosphere.
Overnight: Welcome Heritage Elysium / similar, Shimla
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 4 — Tuesday 11th January SHIMLA

The Queen of the Hills.

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before discovering Shimla.
Begin at The Ridge and historic Christ Church, followed by a gentle exploration of Mall Road, the social heart of Shimla. Enjoy lunch at a carefully selected restaurant before visiting the magnificent Viceregal Lodge, once the summer residence of the British Viceroy. Finish the afternoon at a Himalayan viewpoint, where the mountains become particularly beautiful as the sun begins to set.
Special experience - afternoon tea overlooking the hills.
Overnight: Welcome Heritage Elysium / similar, Shimla
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 5 — Wednesday 12th January SHIMLA

A Relaxed Day in the Himalayas.

Today is deliberately unhurried. After breakfast, enjoy Shimla at a slow pace, enjoying the following experiences. Today we visit Jakhu Temple, Himalayan viewpoints, walk the Colonial heritage trails and have Lunch at a carefully selected restaurant. Later, take a gentle walk through the surrounding cedar forests, breathing in the cool mountain air. Afternoon tea/ coffee overlooking the beauty of Himalayas.

Overnight: Welcome Heritage Elysium / similar, Shimla

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and dinner

DAY 6 — Thursday 13th January SHIMLA → DHARAMSHALA

Into the Himalayan Heartland.

After breakfast, depart Shimla by private coach for Dharamshala.

The road takes you deeper into Himachal Pradesh, through changing Himalayan landscapes and mountain villages. We will include suitable scenic and refreshment/toilet stops along the way, making the journey part of the experience. Enjoy Lunch at a Heritage hotel Judge's Court, Pragpur (pictured above right). Walk through India's first heritage village watching centuries old wooden houses on the either side of cobbled street.

Continue the drive to Dharamshala and check into our hotel. The remainder of the afternoon is free to relax and enjoy the surroundings.

Overnight: Hyatt Regency Dharamshala / similar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 7 — Friday 14th January DHARAMSHALA & McLeod GANJ

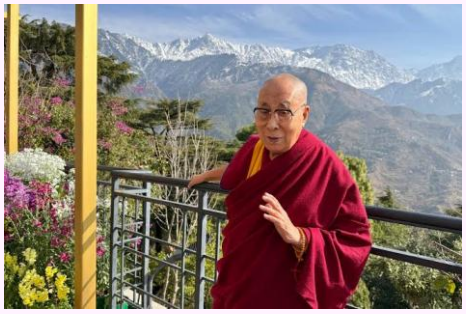
The Tibetan Heart of India.

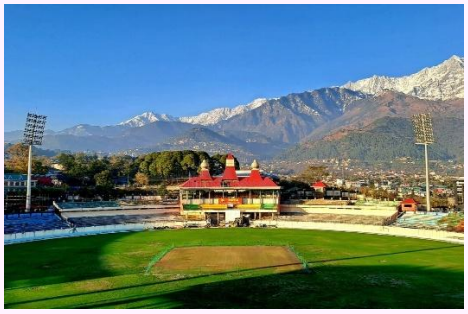
Today discover the unique Tibetan culture of Dharamshala. Visit the Tsuglagkhang Complex, followed by Namgyal Monastery, one of the most important Tibetan monasteries outside Tibet. Continue to the Tibetan Museum, which provides an insight into Tibet's history, culture and diaspora. Explore McLeod Ganj, with its Tibetan cafés, handicraft shops and colourful streets. Enjoy lunch featuring Tibetan cuisine, with dishes such as momos and thukpa.

Next we will visit the Dharamshala Cricket Stadium which has excellent visual experience because of its spectacular Himalayan setting (below right). This is a ground I have always wanted to see!

Overnight: Hyatt Regency Dharamshala / similar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and dinner





DAY 8 — Saturday 15th January DHARAMSHALA

Tibetan Art, Culture & Himalayan Life.

Today experience a quieter and more intimate side of Dharamshala. Visit Norbulingka Institute, dedicated to preserving Tibetan art and craftsmanship. Watch traditional artisans at work in areas such as wood carving, painting, and embroidery.

Lunch will be at a local Tibetan restaurant. Continue through the countryside around Dharamshala, with opportunities for photographs and gentle walks depending on weather and local conditions, visit Dal Lake and Bhagsu.

Next is a special experience – a private Tibetan tea, culinary or cultural interaction can be arranged for the group. The remainder of the afternoon is free to enjoy the hotel.

Overnight: Hyatt Regency Dharamshala / similar

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and Dinner

DAY 9 — Sunday 16th January DHARAMSHALA → AMRITSAR

From the Himalayas to the Golden Temple.

After breakfast, depart Dharamshala for Amritsar.

As the road descends from the mountains, the scenery changes to the fertile plains of Punjab. Arrive in Amritsar, check into the hotel and have lunch. Later make your first visit to the extraordinary Golden Temple. As evening falls, the gilded temple is beautifully illuminated and reflected in the sacred pool surrounding it.

Return to the hotel for dinner.

Overnight: Taj / Hyatt / similar, Amritsar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 10 — Monday 17th January AMRITSAR

Faith, History & the Spirit of Punjab.

After breakfast, a morning visit to the Golden Temple allows you to experience the shrine at a completely different time of day. Witness the devotion of pilgrims arriving from across India and around the world. Experience the remarkable Langar, the community kitchen where thousands of people are served every day regardless of religion, background or social status. Later visit Jallianwala Bagh, one of the most poignant sites associated with India's independence movement. Lunch at a local restaurant enjoying local cuisine.

Continue to the Partition Museum, which preserves the personal stories of one of the most significant events in modern Indian history. In the afternoon, travel to the Attari–Wagah Border to witness the famous border ceremony.

Special evening experience this evening in Amritsar - a Punjabi culinary experience, featuring regional dishes and, where possible, traditional music.

Overnight: Taj / Hyatt / similar, Amritsar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 11 — Tuesday 18th January AMRITSAR ✈ NOIDA (6E2591 – 12:00/13:05 hrs.), drive NOIDA → AGRA (3 hrs.)

From Punjab to the Mughal Heartland.

After a late breakfast, transfer to Amritsar Airport. Take the morning flight from Amritsar to Noida, avoiding a long road journey. On arrival, meet your vehicle and continue to Agra. We will stop at a Midway for Lunch and later continue our journey to Agra.

After arriving in the hotel we will visit Mehtab Bagh, across the Yamuna River, for an atmospheric view of the Taj Mahal in the softer evening light. Return to the hotel for dinner.

Overnight: Mercure / Taj / similar, Agra

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 12 — Wednesday 19th January AGRA

The Taj Mahal & Mughal Grandeur.

Rise early for one of the defining experiences of the journey.

Visit the Taj Mahal at sunrise, when the changing light gives the white marble an extraordinary quality. Return to the hotel for breakfast.

Later explore Agra Fort, the enormous red sandstone complex that became one of the principal residences of the Mughal emperors. Enjoy the Mughlai cuisine lunch at a restaurant.

Special experience - A private introduction to marble inlay craftsmanship, inspired by the techniques used in the Taj Mahal, a Florentine art Pietra dura.

Overnight: Mercure / Taj / similar, Agra

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 13 — Thursday 20th January AGRA → FATEHPUR SIKRI → JAIPUR

The Abandoned Mughal Capital & the Pink City.

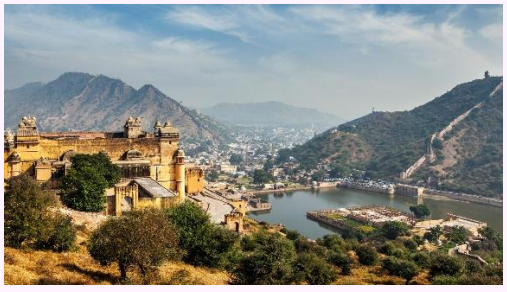
After breakfast, depart Agra for Jaipur. En route visit Fatehpur Sikri, the extraordinary 16th-century city created by Emperor Akbar. Explore its palaces, courtyards and monumental gateways while hearing the story of the city and its eventual abandonment.

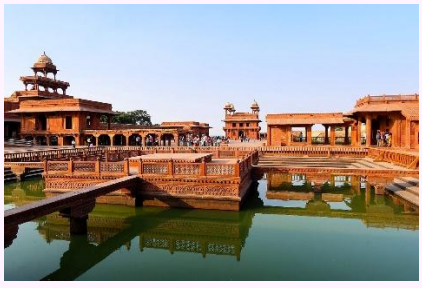
Lunch at Laxmi Vilas Palace, Bharatpur.

Later continue to Jaipur, the famous Pink City and check into our hotel. The evening is free to relax.

Overnight: Marriott / similar, Jaipur

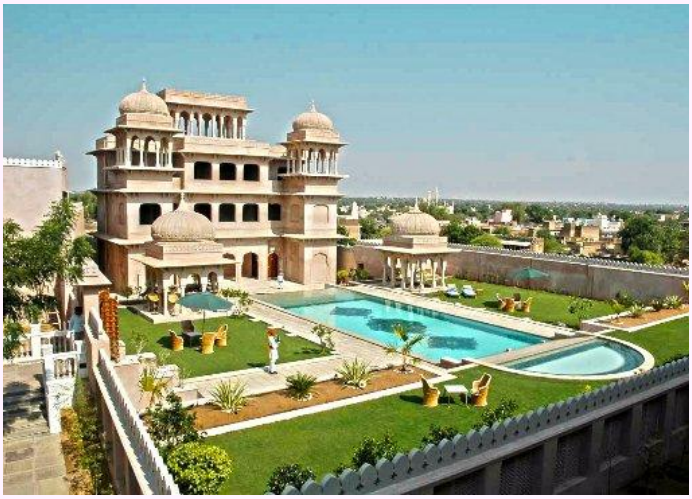
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner





DAY 14 — Friday 21st January JAIPUR
Forts, Palaces & the Royal Heritage of Rajasthan.
Begin with Amber Fort, dramatically situated in the Aravalli Hills. Ride an Elephant like royalty from the base of the fort to the main entrance at the top. If you would prefer not to take the Elephant ride jeeps will be arranged to climb up the hill to the main entrance. Continue to Jal Mahal, the elegant palace surrounded by the waters of Man Sagar Lake. Return to the city to see the iconic Hawa Mahal — Palace of the Winds.
After Lunch we will visit the City Palace, still associated with Jaipur's royal family.
Visit Jantar Mantar, the extraordinary astronomical observatory created by Maharaja Jai Singh II. This place is well worth reading a little more about as it is quite remarkable.
Tonight we plan a special evening - a memorable Rajasthani dinner, accompanied where appropriate by traditional music and cultural entertainment.
Overnight: Marriott / similar, Jaipur
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 15 — Saturday 22nd January JAIPUR → MANDAWA
Into Rajasthan's Open-Air Art Gallery.
After breakfast, depart Jaipur for the Shekhawati region and Mandawa. Check in and enjoy lunch at the palace. Mandawa is famous for its magnificent havelis of merchants which are decorated with fresco paintings. Explore the historic streets and discover the extraordinary painted facades that have earned Shekhawati the reputation of being an open-air art gallery. Visit selected havelis and hear the stories of the wealthy merchant families who created these remarkable homes.
Special evening - Enjoy a traditional Rajasthani dinner with traditional dances and folk music in the atmospheric surroundings of this historic property.
Overnight: Castle Mandawa / similar (pictured below right)
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner



DAY 16 — Sunday 23rd MANDAWA → NEW DELHI → HOME
Farewell to India
Enjoy a relaxed late breakfast at Castle Mandawa. There is time for a final morning walk through Mandawa and, depending on the international flight schedule, perhaps one last haveli visit.
Depart Mandawa by private coach for IGI airport, New Delhi.
Meals: Breakfast and Lunch

Brian Sams is a Toowoomba based horticulturist with a career in running gardening workshops, teaching, consultation, leading garden based tours at home and overseas. Brian has been leading garden tours since 2006. Why? He loves it!