

09 to 22 February 2021

Journey from Amritsar to Ahmedabad to see the hidden riches of India's textile arts and crafts heritage. Travel through beautiful countryside and visiting cultural sights, meet with local artisans in rural and tribal areas who will share their skills with you. Phulkari embroidery, Himachali knitting and contemporary style wooden block printing are just some of the crafts you will learn about and experience. Relax and enjoy the facilities of some of India's best hotels. The tour is led by UK experts who will share their knowledge and expertise throughout!

Tour highlights

- Hotels, resorts, transportation, workshop venues etc meticulously planned keeping in mind safety & hygiene
- Workshops on phulkari & woollen knits with local artisans and experts
- Two days dedicated to hand block printing with an experienced master in contemporary and conventional patterns
- Time in Amritsar – the Golden Temple is unbelievable!
- Authentic village experience with local food, folk music & dance
- Birdwatching in richly biodiverse Punjab state
- Sundowner by the river
- Travel the full length of the UNESCO World Heritage Kalka – Shimla Railway
- Stay at a charming colonial heritage hotel in Shimla on The Mall.



Please note all times are based on current timetables at July 2020 and are subject to change.

Tuesday 09 February

We'll check in at London airport for our overnight flight to...



Wednesday 10 February

...Amritsar via Delhi, arriving in the afternoon. We check-in to our hotel for the rest of the day to acclimatise. After dinner, we visit the magnificent Golden Temple for the evening ceremony known as the 'Palki' service, where the holy book of the Sikh religion is put to rest for the day. It's an awe-inspiring moment of peace, tranquillity and spirituality.

Thursday 11 February

We spend our day in Amritsar visiting the breath-taking Golden Temple, where a 'free canteen' produces many thousands of meals a day – help produce the chapattis if you wish! Then, Jallianwala Bagh grounds, infamous for the massacre by English General Dyer on thousands of innocent unarmed local 'Amritsaris' (people of Amritsar) including women & children. We then continue to see the impressive Khalsa College building premises. We will visit the India – Pakistan border for the evening gate closing ceremony, which is a dramatic and entertaining event!



Friday 12 February

We have the day free to explore the "shop-till-you-drop" local markets of Amritsar, famous for Phulkari rich cloth, readymade ladies tops and hand woven leather ladies shoes (known as Mojris or Jutti). In the afternoon, we have a workshop in the hotel with your textile expert.

Saturday 13 February

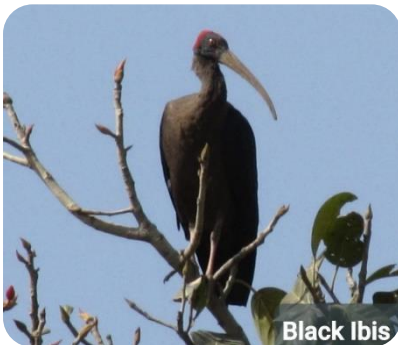
We start our road trip on Asia's oldest major road, the famous Grand Trunk (GT) road which was built by 'SherShah Suri' of the Suri empire (under Mughal dynasty) running roughly 3,670 kms (2,280 miles) from Chittagong (now in Bangladesh) to Kabul (in Afghanistan). We travel through the green pastures of mustard leaves growing in abundance to Hoshiarpur district (140 kms / 3 hrs) to stay at a retreat in Mansowal village for 2 nights.



In the late afternoon, we make a small adventure by jeep across to the riverside for a sundowner drink and a possible dinner (weather permitting).

Sunday 14 February

An early start to enjoy a quiet moment watching the birds in the wetlands and green belt on the outskirts of Mansowal village set beautifully on the banks of the tributary of mighty river Sutlej and a very famous Bhakra (2nd highest in India) & Nangal Dams (13 kms away). Around 9,000 migratory birds are found here of 30 different species. The beautiful Asian paradise flycatcher can also be seen here. People come here to take a holy bath during Amavasya, that is, during a new moon and during Baisakhi, to celebrate the forming of the Khalsa, or collective body of all Sikhs.



We return to our resort for breakfast. Later today we have a fantastic programme lined up with our first local workshop planned with the local women from the village who are eager to sit down and teach their 'Phulkari' embroidery art to us. This will be organized in the retreat premises with the setup of a typical Punjab village. Some of the side activities may include milking a buffalo, making a jute rope, mustard leaf dish 'saag' with 'makki ki roti', unleavened flat bread made of maize or corn flour cooked traditionally in a cow dung tandoor (clay oven), authentic Chicken Tikkas in the tandoor, learning the famous 'Bhangra' dance art form, riding a tractor, getting henna art on your hand or just having a drink and taking it all in slowly at your own pace. All in all, an incredible India experience!





Monday 15 February

After early breakfast, we drive south-east to foothills of Shivalik mountain range (130 kms / 3.5 hrs) to Kalka railway station which is the start point of the Kalka Shimla Railway line. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site over 96 kms long, passing through 102 tunnels (with longest being almost 1,144 m long), 869 bridges (33 major,

/including one triple arch bridge) with a gradient of 1:33 and unparalleled view of the natural beauty of the Shivalik mountain range of the mighty Himalayas. You cannot visit Shimla and not ride on this mesmerising railway! We arrive in Shimla, the Summer Capital of the British from 1864 till India's independence to check-in heritage colonial hotel on The Mall Road.

Tuesday 16 February

After breakfast, we have a guided walking tour of Shimla with a walk on The Mall Road visiting Christ Church, Gaiety Theatre, Scandal Point and the Ridge. We'll return to our hotel for lunch. Later, we have a workshop in Himachali style wool knitting with the local ladies.



Wednesday 17 February

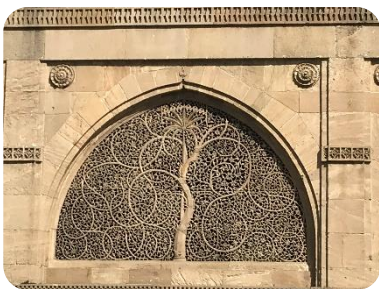


This morning we have a guided visit to the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies (IIAS) which was the erstwhile Viceregal Lodge during the 'British Raj', used as the Head of State's official residence and seat of power in the summer time when each year the capital from New Delhi was shifted to the hills in Shimla to escape the heat. Hence the existence of the beautiful narrow-gauge (2'6") railway line from foothills up the hills which brought us up to this hill town. The rest of the day is free to enjoy this charming hill station. Almost all the shops sell original Pashminas for as low as Rupees 250. Enjoy!

Thursday 18 February

After breakfast, we drive down to Chandigarh airport to board our flight to Ahmedabad for four nights. The city was founded in the 15th century, Ahmedabad is the largest city in the state of Gujarat.

Friday 19 February



Breakfast at the hotel is followed by a visit to Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram and the Sidi Saiyyed Mosque to see the exquisite carving on stone walls known as 'jali' work, House of MG Textile Museum. We will then have a short walk through the busy streets of Ahmedabad and indulge in some shopping for local items such as threads, fabric, braids and decorative wedding material. We walk through to the Ahmed Shah Mosque, also

known as Jama Masjid, built by Ahmed Shah I, founder of Ahmedabad in 1414. We will return to our hotel by early evening.



Saturday 20 February

After breakfast, we transfer to a nearby establishment where we have arranged our workshop with a master of hand block printing in her exclusive personal setup which is large enough for 20-25 people to work independently. This is a state-of-the-art setup for hand block printing on the banks of river Sabarmati. The owner and founder of the setup is a cotton textile guru.



For those not interested in hand-block printing, we offer an optional tour, depending upon the number of people, we suggest an excursion to the 'Adalaj ni Vav', a beautiful, intricately carved and five stories deep stepwell built in 1498 in the memory of Rana Veer Singh. Step wells like this were once integral to the semi-arid regions of Gujarat, as they provided water for drinking, washing and bathing. These wells were also venues for colourful festivals and sacred rituals.



Sunday 21 February

After breakfast at the hotel, we return to continue our hand block printing project. Alternatively, there is an optional tour for group members: a visit to the AutoWorld Vintage Car Museum. With more than 100 vintage cars including Rolls-Royces, Mercedes, Bentleys, Chryslers, Lincolns it is the largest collection of vintage cars in India. One can also take a short ride in a vintage car.

Monday 22 February

We'll transfer to the airport to catch the early morning flight home, which should have us back in the UK at the end of the day.

What's included?

Daily breakfast and dinner, 4 lunches, accommodation in 5 star hotels (or best available locally) for 12 nights, internal flight & train, all transport, workshops, local guide, entrance fees to monuments and sights, services of a UK tour manager and a Textile Expert and excursions as set out in the itinerary and the services of a Darjeeling Tours Limited Tour Manager from India to accompany throughout the tour. (Personal and incidental expenses are not included).

Prices

Fully inclusive price from London:	£ 3,395 per person based on two people sharing
Ground only price (international flights excluded)	£ 2,800 per person based on two people sharing
Single supplement:	£ 550



Please note that carriers, flights times and train times are subject to change.
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