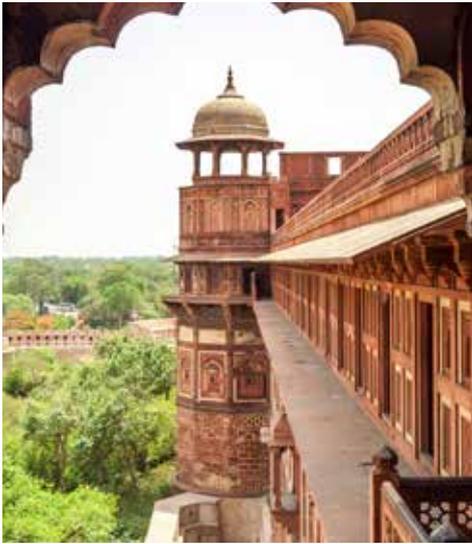


India and Nepal by Rail



TRIP OVERVIEW

Journeying through the interior of India and mountains of Nepal, take in the temple artistry of Hindu legends, bustling bazaars draped in colourful textiles and unforgettable scenery of the world's mightiest peaks. Encounter India's web of colonial-era railways as you travel from Delhi's bustling streets and the marbled splendour of the Taj Mahal to artistic Lucknow and the spiritual centre of Varanasi, then fly to Nepal where wildlife encounters and sacred stupas round off this 15-day tour.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information that you require for a smooth and comfortable trip to India & Nepal. Please take the time to read this dossier to familiarise yourself with all the aspects of our tour. It includes important information such as visa requirements.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 1: UK to Delhi

Depart London on your scheduled, overnight flight to Delhi.

DAY 2: Delhi B/L/D

On arrival in Delhi, you will be met by your local guide and transferred to your hotel. After settling in, a short tour of the beautifully planned city of New Delhi will follow. Offering you a taste of its imperial glory, you'll drive past the India Gate, President's House, Parliament Building and visit the Birla Temple, made purely out of 2,000 tons of Rajasthan white marble.

DAY 3: Delhi B/L/D

Witness the contrast between Old Delhi's historic charms and New Delhi's detailed colonial town planning on today's rickshaw tour through the city. Travel past the imposing red sandstone exterior of the magnificent Red Fort and through Delhi's bustling streets to Humayun's Tomb, an elaborate mausoleum set in beautifully landscaped gardens. Journey onwards to the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial, draped in floral tributes, and the towering minaret and ruins of the ancient Qutab Minar complex.

DAY 4: Delhi to Agra B/L/D

Board your early morning train and journey from Delhi to Agra. On arrival, make your way to one of India's most iconic landmarks and the jewel of Agra - the Taj Mahal. Taking over 22 years to build and boasting inlays glittering with precious stones, this architectural gem is a highlight of the trip. Marvel at the distinctive minarets, gleaming dome and beautifully manicured gardens of this magnificent ivory-white mausoleum, commissioned by Emperor Shah Jahan to hold the remains of his beloved third wife. Continue on to the colossal complex of the Agra Fort and explore this vast red sandstone complex of striking pavilions, palaces and courtyards.

DAY 5: Agra to Lucknow B/L/D

Today's scenic train ride takes you from Agra to Lucknow, India's former artistic and cultural hub. On arrival, check into the hotel and spend the afternoon at leisure, free to relax or explore your new surroundings.

Please note: In the event of any major delay or cancellation of the train service, the journey will be made by coach instead. The itinerary will otherwise remain the same.

DAY 6: Lucknow B/L/D

After breakfast, a full-day city tour of Lucknow visits the city's most impressive highlights. Wander through the recently restored Hazratganj Market and visit the 1857 Memorial Museum, where the collection of old photographs, documents and objects on display offers insight into the major historical events that have shaped Lucknow. Continue on to the historic Juma Masjid mosque, the fortified royal villa and gardens of Sikander Bagh and the gilded dome and intricate inlays of Chota Imambara. Pass through the imposing 18th-century gateway of Rumi Darwaza, travelling past the stark red walls of Taluqdar Hall, the towering peak of Husainabad Clock Tower and the crumbling splendour of Kaiserbagh Palace. Enjoy the greenery of Begum Hazrat Mahal Park, the throngs of the buzzing Aminabad bazaar and the regal facade of Chattar Manzil before returning to your hotel after this comprehensive day of sightseeing.

DAY 7: Lucknow to Varanasi B/L/D

Enjoy rolling landscapes as your train carries you from Lucknow to Varanasi, India's spiritual centre. After check-in at your hotel in Varanasi, an evening tour leads to the banks of the sacred Ganges River, lined with vast stone steps, or 'ghats', used daily by thousands of pilgrims in their cleansing rituals. If time permits, witness the captivating Ganga Aarti ceremony as fire-lit offerings are floated down the river accompanied by chants and prayers.

DAY 8: Varanasi to Kathmandu, via Delhi B/L/D

Watch the sunrise over Varanasi with an early morning boat trip on the Ganges, allowing a different perspective of this colourful waterfront city. Disembark for a walking tour through the narrow alleys to the historic landmarks of the old town. Transfer to the airport for your flight to Kathmandu, via Delhi whose ancient Buddhist temples and stupas have earned it more UNESCO recognised sites than any other city in the world. On arrival, transfer to your hotel.

DAY 9: Kathmandu B/L/D

Experience Nepal's temple-studded capital on a full day of sightseeing. Join troops of monkeys as you take in the intricate carvings of the Buddhist stupa of Swayambhunath under the watchful painted eyes that adorn its sides. Travel to the other famed sights of the Kathmandu Valley, including Patan, one of the oldest known Buddhist cities, where you can wander among its 136 monasteries and temples, visiting ancient Krishna Temple, the sunken bath, the soaring temple of Taleju and the detailed decorative carvings of its monuments. Return to Kathmandu for your overnight stay.

DAY 10: Kathmandu to Chitwan B/L/D

Today starts with a visit to Pashupatinath temple, a sacred Hindu temple

dedicated to Lord Shiva and place of worship for the fascinating painted holy men of Nepal. Depart Kathmandu and drive to Chitwan, arriving in time for an afternoon visit to Tharu village, where you'll learn more about the culture of this indigenous Nepalese group, famous for their resistance to malaria. Return to your hotel for dinner and an entertaining Tharu dance program, usually performed during traditional festivals.

DAY 11: Chitwan B/L/D

The city of Chitwan (meaning 'Heart of the Jungle') is aptly named, with the wildlife haven of Chitwan National Park lying within its borders. Enjoy a full day of animal encounters, starting with a canoe ride up the Rapti River where you may spot the rare gharial, a fish-eating crocodile which was once on the brink of extinction. Next, visit the local elephant breeding centre to watch mother and baby elephants at play and, if the timing is right, enjoy a feeding as they graze on 'kuchilis', elephant sweets made from molasses, salt and rice, wrapped in grass. Watch elephants bathing in the river alongside the resort, with the chance (at a fee) for a personal shower as you sit on one of the elephants. After lunch, the group will make its way further into the jungle for a guided safari upon the backs of these majestic animals, led by the local mahouts (elephant riders) who will help you to spot one-horned rhinoceros, deer, boars and perhaps even the elusive Bengal tiger.

Please note: Elephants are not taken into the water in winter as the cold

river water can be bad for their health.

DAY 12: Chitwan to Bandipur B/L/D

Depart Chitwan on a scenic journey through rural villages and rolling countryside to Bandipur, stopping en route for lunch. On arrival, check into your hotel and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure.

DAY 13: Bandipur B/L/D

A full-day tour of the hilltop settlement of Bandipur explores its network of winding lanes, traditional Newari architecture and buzzing bazaar, flanked by pagoda-style temples. From your lofty vantage point, take in the sunset and sunrise over the Manaslu mountain range and enjoy spectacular mountain views.

DAY 14: Bandipur to Kathmandu B/L/D

Following breakfast, travel back into the Himalayan foothills as you make your way to Kathmandu for your overnight stay.

DAY 15: Kathmandu to UK B

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your return flights to London, or continue on to your chosen extension.

ACCOMMODATION DETAILS & MAP

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience, location, comfort or character, and can range from business hotels to leisure hotels. Hotel accommodation is generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note there is no international classification system for hotels, and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and India and Nepal. All group tours hotels have private bathroom facilities and air-conditioning, where needed.

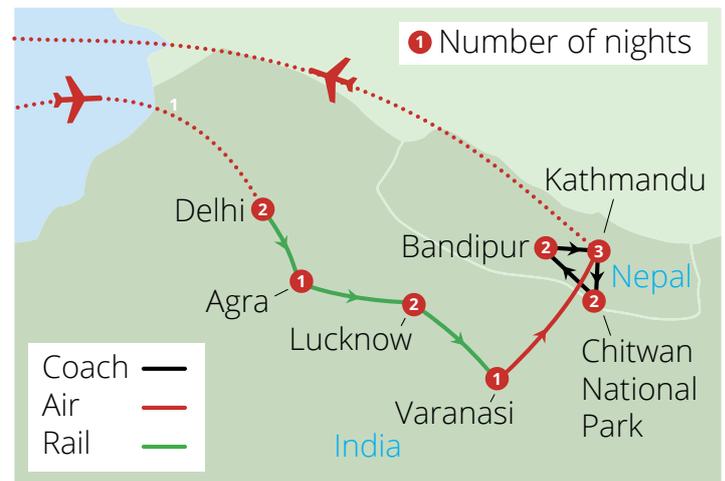
Rest assured that all accommodation used by Mercury Holidays is regularly inspected by our staff and partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

If you have booked a triple share please note that your room will be a twin room with a rollaway bed or sofa bed added. This may limit the floor space in the room.

Please note: final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Meals

Breakfast is always western style and served in the hotel each morning. Lunch and dinner will either be always taken at local restaurants or at your hotel.



ON YOUR ARRIVAL

On your arrival in Delhi, please collect your luggage and proceed to the exit in the Customs Hall. You will be met by a representative of **Jayasree Travels & Tours** who will be holding a sign displaying: "Mercury Holidays". The Mercury Holidays/Jayasree Travels & Tours representative will show you to your transfer vehicle. Your guide will be able to answer any queries you may have, however if you need to contact Jayasree Travels & Tours during your stay the details are:

Jayasree Travels and Tours

F 341-Ground Floor Lado Sarai New Delhi 110030
 Contact number: 0091 471 250 5067

Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for Jayasree Travels and Tours

Ms Jayasree Vikraman	0091 974 700 5888
Ms Samitha Azhar	0091 974 471 3380
Mr Biju Unnikrishnan A.G	0091 952 618 8860
Mr Harish Kumar	0091 952 618 8859
Mr Amit Bhardwa	0091 995 898 8719

WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR TOUR

Visas

India: A visa is required for entry into India. British Citizen Passport Holders will need to obtain a tourist visa. We work closely with The Travel Visa Company who will be able to arrange your visa on your behalf. Please call them on 01270 250 590 and quote "Mercury Holidays". The Travel Visa Company can only apply for this 120 days before your proposed travel date. When calling the Travel Visa Company they will advise you of any changes to the fees or the procedure, they will also advise you of all information they will require in order to apply for the visa. Alternatively you can visit The Indian Visa Application Centre in London: 142-148 Goswell Road, London, EC1B 7DU. Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months before you enter India. Visa requirements are subject to change and obtaining a visa is the responsibility of the traveller and not Mercury Holidays. We recommend you check with your destinations' Tourist Board or Embassy prior to departure for the most up to date guidelines regarding visas and passport validity.

Nepal: British passport holders do not need to obtain a visa for Nepal prior to departure. A Nepalese visa can be purchased on arrival into Kathmandu;

you will need to complete and download a form from the Nepal Embassy website and present this completed form on arrival at immigration together with your payment (currently USD \$30). You must print the form with the barcode and take it with you for arrival. The barcode is only valid up to 15 days after issue so please complete this form within 2 weeks of travel. You will also need to complete an 'arrival card' at the airport. When applying for the visa on arrival you will need to ensure you apply for a multiple entry visa. We recommend you check the following website before travelling for all the most up to date advice, requirements and any changes <http://www.nepembassy.org.uk/visa.php>. We strongly advise you to check with your destinations' Tourist Board or Embassy for the most up-to-date guidelines regarding required passport validity.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you and all members of your party are suitably insured as soon as you book your holiday. It is a condition of booking that you must have suitable travel insurance. It is important that you purchase travel insurance that suitably covers your participation in whatever activities you may undertake at the time that you make your

booking. To assist you with this, we have arranged travel insurance in partnership with Holiday Extras. To arrange your travel insurance with Holiday Extras, please call 0800 781 4237 and quote 'WK830' for preferential rates. Please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. Mercury Holidays will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Health and Vaccinations

It is your responsibility to check any health and vaccination requirements applicable to your booked arrangements. We can only provide general information about this. Health and hygiene facilities and disease risks vary from country to country. You should take health advice about your own needs as early as possible and in good time before your departure. Sources of information include; www.fco.gov.uk, www.travelhealthpro.org.uk, www.hpa.org.uk, your General Practitioner or a specialist clinic.

Covid-19 - Nepal

Nepal will accept the UK's proof of COVID-19 recovery and vaccination record and proof of COVID-19 vaccination issued in the Crown Dependencies. Your final vaccine dose must have been administered at least 14 days prior to travel. If you're not fully vaccinated, you must obtain a negative PCR test not more than 72 hours before your flight of first departure to enter Nepal, and should then be able to obtain a visa on arrival. Please visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/nepal/entry-requirements for full information.

Physical Accessibility

This tour is accessible to most people with a good level of fitness and normal mobility. It involves climbing of steep stairs and getting on and off coaches. This tour is not suitable for anyone with walking difficulties. All our tours feature a "Tour Pace" to help find the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights, climb stairs and get on and off coaches and boats. The tour pace for India & Nepal by Rail is challenging. A higher level of fitness as required as you may be on your feet for most of the day though this will be interspersed with regular breaks and vary from day to day. You will be walking around the sights, getting on and off coaches, trains, boats and climbing steps which may be irregular. There may be some time spend at high altitude. You will stay in variety of hotels, possibly including overnight trains, and accommodation standards may not match those you are used to at home. Our guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Tour Guides - National Guide

This is a fully escorted tour, meaning that you will be met on arrival by your national guide who will remain with you for the duration of your trip. You will also be joined by a local guide in each of the cities which you visit, ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

Private Tour

If you have booked a private tour then you will be accompanied by a Driver Guide or a Driver and Local Guides. These will be available to you during all scheduled sightseeing. Private Tours can depart on any day of the week depending on flight and train schedules and the opening days of the attractions. They will follow the itinerary as described in the brochure unless you have been advised otherwise and you will still have all of the same meals, sightseeing and local excursions included.

WHAT TO PACK

- Sunglasses, sunscreen and hat in summer
- Waterproof lightweight jacket
- Flip flops/sandals (shoes that are easy to remove when entering religious buildings)
- Long, lightweight skirts or trousers and long sleeved tops (you will need to have your legs and arms covered when going into religious buildings)
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Warm clothing and thermals in winter
- Camera and charger/spare batteries

Tippling

For India, it is customary to tip your guide and driver. This is at your discretion but we recommend you allow approximately £3 per person per day. It is asked that you tip in pounds and not local currency, please do not give coins as these are difficult to exchange. For Nepal, should you wish to tip, we recommend you tip both your driver and guide approximately £3.00 (\$5.00) per person per day in total. Should you wish to tip in Bhutan, we recommend to tip your guide approx. USD \$5 per person per day and your driver approx. USD \$3 per person per day.

Group Size

The minimum number of travellers in your group will be 10, and the maximum will be 35. If in the unlikely event there are less than 10 people booked on your tour date, we will endeavour to reduce any disruption to your holiday and try to operate your tour with lower passenger numbers. If we are not able to operate your departure date, then you may be asked to change to a different date and a full refund will be made available to you should this alternative not be suitable.

Currency Exchange

The currency in India is the Rupee or Rs. The Rupee is a closed currency and officially you are not allowed to take any cash out of India. The currency in Nepal is the Nepalese Rupee (NPR). In India and Nepal US Dollars and UK sterling are both often accepted should you wish to keep an alternative currency on you. There are ATMs in Thimphu and Paro but they generally only accept local cards, therefore, it is important that you take sufficient cash to exchange with you. We recommend that you exchange your currency before you leave the UK. It is important that you budget carefully and ensure you have the right form of currency before you arrive in the country. Cash machines will also be available throughout the tour in order to withdraw money in your local currency.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover any personal purchases such as souvenirs, laundry, any meals not included in the itinerary as well as drinks and any additional snacks. Approximately £400 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour. It is a good idea to try and maintain a supply of small notes and change in the local currency for tipping or small purchases.

Credit Card Information

As normal practice you will be asked for your credit card details on check-in at the hotel in order to cover any extras incurred during your stay. If you do not have a credit card you may be asked for a cash deposit. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in hotels.

Itinerary Changes

The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. The schedules of the domestic airlines in country are subject to frequent changes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your local guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Some road construction &/or weather conditions may lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

- Binoculars
- Mosquito/Insect Repellent
- Personal toiletries and first aid kit containing travel pills, rehydration powder, plasters, stomach settlers, antiseptic creams, aspirin etc
- Anti-bacterial hand gel
- An electric plug converter - three different plug sockets are used, so it is best to bring a multi adapter
- Loo paper for public WC's

FLIGHT INFORMATION

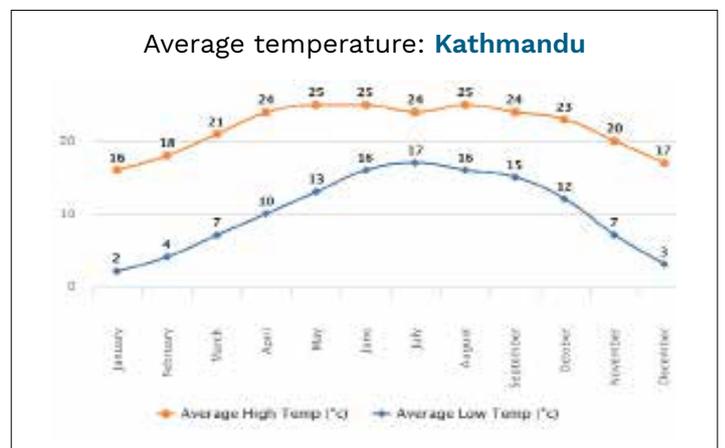
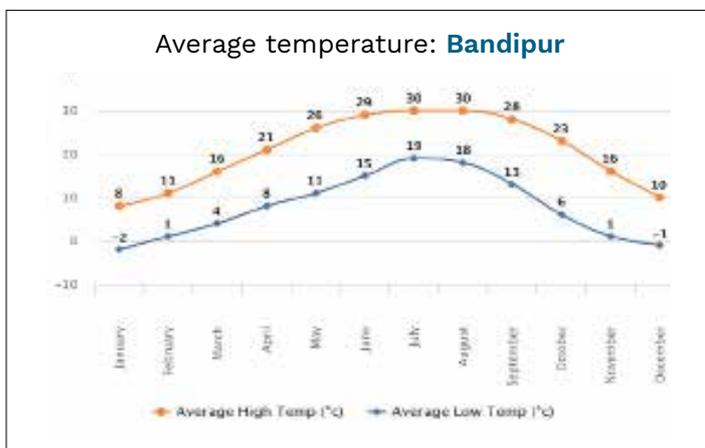
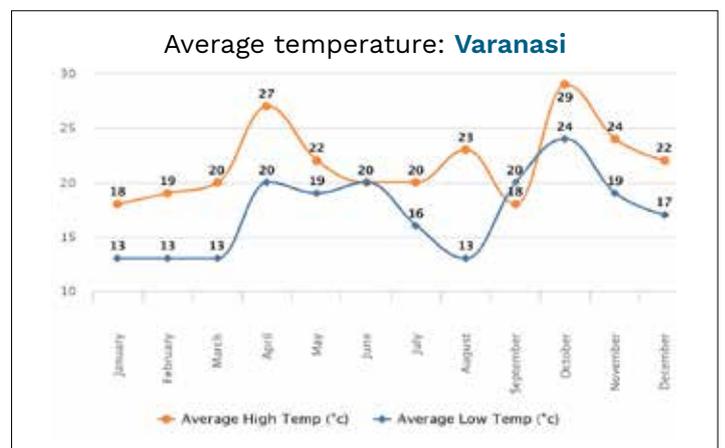
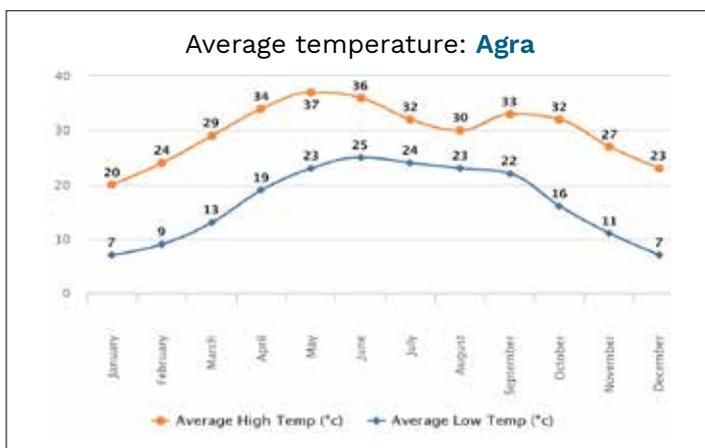
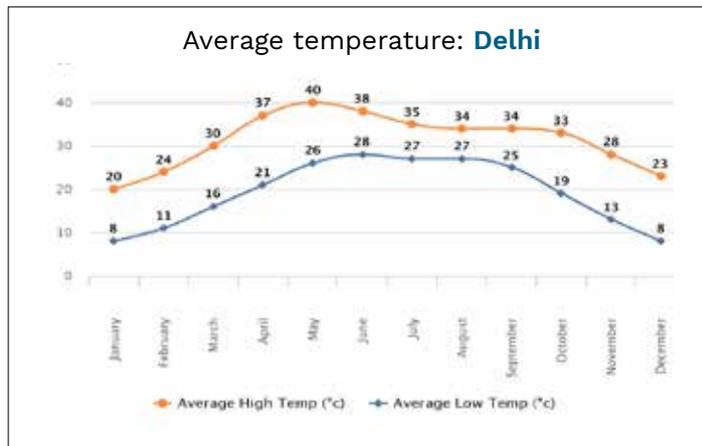
IMPORTANT: Please note that final flight details, including terminal, airline and baggage allowance, will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure. A printed E-ticket is no longer required at check-in, all you need to do is present your passport to the staff at the desk and your boarding pass will be given to you.

Airport Extras

If you wish to arrange Airport car parking or accommodation at preferential rates, we recommend you book this in advance with Holiday Extras on 0871 360 2000, quoting HX313.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.



Tigers of Ranthambore

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0333 003 0522



TRIP OVERVIEW

Once a famous hunting ground for the gallant rulers of Jaipur, Ranthambore National Park is spread over 1,344km² and is one of the biggest national parks in India. Choose this extension to experience a variety of wildlife including tigers, leopards, deer and much more.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your add-on in Ranthambore.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 15: Kathmandu to Delhi D

This morning you will fly from Kathmandu to Delhi where you will be met on arrival and transferred to your hotel for the rest of the day at leisure.

DAY 16: Delhi to Ranthambore B/L/D

After breakfast you will transfer to the railway station to board the train for a relaxing journey through rural India to Ranthambore for a wildlife experience of a lifetime.

DAY 17: Ranthambore B/L/D

Enjoy an early morning jungle safari followed by breakfast back at your hotel and some leisure time when you can take advantage of the hotel's outdoor pool. A second safari trip will follow after lunch to visit further areas of the park.

DAY 18: Ranthambore to Delhi B/L/D

Following an early breakfast you will catch the train back to Delhi, arriving in time for lunch with the rest of the day at leisure.

DAY 19: Delhi to the UK B

Depart after breakfast for your flight to the UK

Hotel Information

Ranthambore (2 nights): 4★ Ranthambore Regency Hotel - Ranthambore Rd, Saptar, Sawaimadhopur, Rajasthan 322001. Contact number: 0091 7462 221 176

Delhi (2 nights): 4★ Park Hotel - 15 Parliament Street, New Delhi - 110 001, India, Contact number: 0091 (0)11 2374 3000

If the hotels listed are unavailable, alternatives will be used of a similar standard.

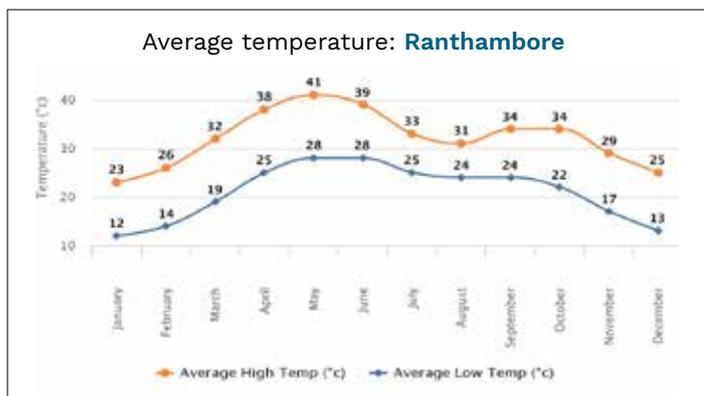
Tour guides

This is a fully escorted tour extension, meaning that you will be met on arrival by your national guide who will remain with you for the duration of your trip ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover any personal purchases, such as souvenirs, snacks/drinks and laundry.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE



4★ Ranthambore Regency Hotel

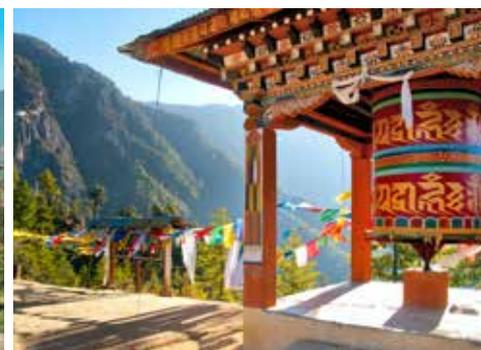
FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

For any further enquiries or for more information call us on **0333 003 0522**

Mystical Bhutan Extension

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0333 003 0522



TRIP OVERVIEW

Your 4 night extension to mystical Bhutan offers you the chance to become one of the privileged few to say they have experienced this beautiful kingdom in this relatively untouched corner of the Himalayas.

ON YOUR ARRIVAL

On your arrival in Paro you will be met by a representative from our local agent, **Jayasree Travels and Tours**, holding a sign displaying: "Mercury Holidays". The Mercury Holidays/**Jayasree Travels and Tours** representative will show you to your transfer vehicle. Your guide will be able to answer any queries. However, if you need to contact **Jayasree Travels and Tours**, during your stay the details are:

Jayasree Travels and Tours

F 341-Ground Floor
 Lado Sarai
 New Delhi 110030
 Contact number: 0091 471 2505067

Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for Jayasree Travels

Contact	Telephone number
Mrs Samitha Azhar:	0091 974 471 3380
Mr Biju Unnikrishnan.A.G:	0091 952 618 8860
Mr Harish Kumar:	0091 952 618 8859
Mr Amit Bhardwaj:	0091 995 898 8719

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your extension to Bhutan.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 15: Kathmandu to Paro B/D

Depart Kathmandu in the morning for your flight to Paro in Bhutan, offering incredible views across the entire Himalayan region. Your guide will meet you on arrival and accompany you to Thimphu, stopping en-route to admire the joining of the Thimphu and Paro Rivers at Chuzom before arriving at your hotel with some time to relax. In the afternoon visit the impressive fortress of Trashichoedzong, then 'Buddha Point' where locals chant prayers to the largest Buddha statue in Bhutan. In the evening explore Thimphu's main market area and browse through paintings, hand-woven textiles and jewellery.

DAY 16: Thimphu to Paro B/L/D

Explore the Thimphu valley with a trip to the National Library and a weaving centre. Taking the scenic highway back to Paro appreciate the dramatic river valleys before arriving at your hotel late morning. Next visit Ta Dzong, originally built as a watchtower during the 1864 Duar War and now home to the National Museum focussing on royal memorabilia and Buddhist art.

DAY 17: Paro B/L/D

Visit the breath-taking Taktshang Monastery perched on the side of a cliff, a place of worship recognised as one of Bhutan's most famous monasteries. In the afternoon drive to the ruins of Drukgyel built back in 1649 as a control point along the route to Tibet.

DAY 18: Paro to Kathmandu B

Depart Paro after breakfast for your return flight to Kathmandu, with the rest of the day at leisure.

DAY 19: Kathmandu to the UK B

Transfer to Kathmandu airport for your flight to the UK.

Due to frequent flight schedules changes by the domestic airline, some amendments may need to be made to the order of touring within Bhutan.

Hotel Information

Thimphu (1 night): 3★ Pelyang Boutique - Opposite to City Hotel,

Dungkhor Lam, Thimphu 11001, Bhutan

Contact number: 00975 2 330 630

Paro (2 nights): 3★ Rema Resort - CCQ3+CCM, Sangchoker Road, Remphakha Village, Nemjo, Paro, Bhutan

Contact number: 00975 8 271 082

Kathmandu (1 night): 4★ Hotel Himalaya - Sahid Shukra Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal 44700, Nepal.

Contact number: 00977 1-5523900.

If the hotels listed are unavailable alternatives will be used of a similar standard.

Visas

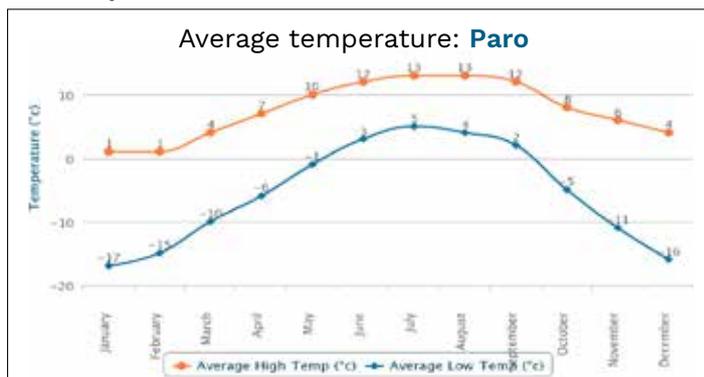
British Passport Holders do need a permit to enter Bhutan. However, we have included the cost of this in the extension price and the Mercury Holidays representative will give this to you before you depart Nepal for your flight to Paro. You will also need to make sure you request a multiple entry visa on arrival in Nepal at the start of your main tour.

Please note:

Due to frequent flight schedules changes by the domestic airline, some amendments may need to be made to the order of touring within Bhutan.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.



Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

For any further enquiries or for more information call us on **0333 003 0522**