

# Athulya Bharat Tour

08 Nights/09 Days

Delhi-2, Jaipur-2, Agra-1, Orchha-1, Khajuraho-1, Varanasi-1

## Day 01

### Delhi (Arrival)



Arrive Delhi, Meet, greet and transfer to Hotel. Delhi has a long historical past dating back to the pre-historic 6th Century BC era when it was founded as 'Indraprastha', the capital of the Pandavas of the Mahabharata epic. It was earlier known as 'Hastinapur' or 'Elephant City' according to the ancient Hindu Sanskrit text. It is said that the ancient Indraprasth Village existed where the Old Fort stands after which it was demolished by the British to make way for constructing New Delhi towards the late 19th Century. Archaeological excavations in 1966 revealed fragments of grey painted ware dating back to the Pandava era and the remains of 7 cities, relics dating back to the Mauryan Period including two sandstone Pillars with inscription of Emperor Ashoka [273 BC-236 BC] discovered near Noida in Srinivaspuri that were brought to the city by Firuz Shah Tughlaq in the 14th Century.

Day free for leisure and own programme. Overnight stay.

## Day 02

### Delhi



After Breakfast, visit **Red Fort**, The Red Fort or the Lal Quila as it is traditionally called is situated in old Delhi, the capital of India. The Red Fort was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in the 17th

century that took around 9 years to complete this magnificent structure and around 10 million rupees to build the fort. The Red Fort is a masterpiece of architecture and is one of the most visited spot in old Delhi. The Masjid-i Jahān-Numā, commonly known as the **Jama Masjid** of Delhi, is the principal mosque of Old Delhi in India. Commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, builder of the Taj Mahal, and completed in the year 1656 AD, it is the largest and best-known mosque in India. The name Jahān-Numā comes from Persian meaning "World-reflecting". It lies at the origin of a very busy central street of Old Delhi, Chandni Chowk. The later name, Jami Masjid, is a reference to the weekly Friday noon congregation prayers of Muslims, Jummah, which are usually done at a mosque, the "congregational mosque" or "jāmi' masjid". The courtyard of the mosque can hold up to twenty-five thousand worshippers. The mosque also houses several relics in a closet in the north gate, including an antique copy of the Qur'an written on deer skin. This City of New Delhi is probably one of the well planned cities designed by Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker around the likes of the British rulers with **India Gate** and the surrounding areas of Raj path forming the main plan of central Delhi including the Rashtrapati Bhavan formerly known as the Viceroy's Palace commanding a panoramic view of the city. The view stretches from Raisina Hills running seamlessly across India Gate and Raj path but is hindered only by the National Stadium of Delhi. India Gate was initially constructed to symbolise as the gateway of Delhi for the British Leaders entering into the Palatial grounds of the Viceroy's Palace and their surrounding administrative buildings and offices. This form of design was planned to probably imitate the Mughal Style of creating

massive and impressive gateways situated at the peripherals of the Palace grounds sprawling over hundreds of acres of land to mark the entry and exit points of the Emperors and Royalties followed by his courtiers and administrative heads. These entrance and exit gateways had a special significance for the Emperors and Sultans through which they enter and leave their kingdom and well protected cities to travel to other parts of the country. India Gate may have once been the pride of the British Empire; however, today it is correctly converted into one of the largest 'War Memorials' in India formerly called as the 'All India War Memorial' and forms the most prominent, distinguished feature and National pride of Delhi and the Country. The famous Humayun's Tomb of Delhi is the first garden tomb in India. A complex commissioned in 1562 CE by Hamida Banu Begum Humayun's wife and designed by Mirak Mirza a Persian architect this monument is one of the first specimens of Mughal architecture in the Indian subcontinent. Located on the banks of the River Yamuna this structure was declared a UNESCO Heritage site in 1993. The famous Humayun's Tomb of Delhi is considered to be the precursor of the 'Taj Mahal' as far as the architectural structure is concerned. It represents the Mughal style of architecture at its best. One of the major attractions in the city this mausoleum serves as the burial ground of several Mughals apart from the emperor himself. The Humayun's Tomb is a magnificent piece of architecture that took almost 9 years to complete with an expenditure of nearly one and a half million rupees. The mausoleum is a 140 feet high structure with a central dome. The double-layered dome has a white marble exterior but the rest of the tomb is made of red sandstone, with white marble ornamentation. Built over acres of lush green land and surrounded by fountains this complex is home to a well manicured garden, a beautiful mosque and several other tombs. Qutub Minar is the pride of Delhi. The tall minaret was constructed in 1192 by Qutab-ud-din Aibak, and later completed by his successor Iltutmish. The soaring conical tower is an exquisite example of Indo-Islamic Afghan architecture. Qutub Minar is a World Heritage Site and has survived the ravages of time impressively. The Minar of Delhi is surrounded by a lush green garden, which is an ideal leisurely place for visitors. Qutub Minar is the favourite destination of tourists. It is India's most visited monument attracting around 3.9 million visitors every year. Each of the 5 storeys and tower of Qutub Minar has unique designs. It was hit by lightning couple of times and was damaged. The subsequent rulers repaired it. Thus it is standing mightily as it was before till date. Qutub Minar is a great masterpiece of Mughal architecture. The base of the Qutub Minar measures 14.32 meters and the top of the structure

measures 2.75 meters. The bird eye's view of Delhi city from the top is amazing. The base of first storey has alternate angular and circular flutings, the second one is round. The third storey of the Qutub Minar has angular flutings. The balconies projecting out heighten the beauty of the Minar. The tower is so high that around 379 steps are needed to be climbed to reach the top. Another taller tower adjacent to Qutub Minar is named Alai Minar which is somewhat tilted in one direction. The verses from the holy Qur'an are carved on sandstone walls of Qutub Minar. This monument serves the purpose of calling people for prayer in the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. This is a tower of victory, a monument that signify the might of Islam, or a tower for keeping a check for defense.

Back to hotel. Overnight stay.

### Day 03

#### Delhi>>Jaipur (260 Kms/07 Hours)



After breakfast, checkout and drive to Jaipur. Check-in. Later visit **Birla Temple** or Birla Mandir is the common name for the Lakshmi Narayan Temple at Jaipur. It is called thus after the Birlas, a business family who constructed the temple in 1988. The Birla Temple stands at the foot of the Moti Doongri (a fortress which was turned into a palace for Gayatri Devi by Raja man Singh II) and the temple's excellent architecture and splendid marble carvings make it a pleasure to visit. The main idols of the temple are Lord Vishnu (also known as Narayan) and his consort Goddess Lakshmi but the temple has many small shrines devoted to various Hindu Gods and Goddesses. On the outside of the temple walls one can see many carvings of many historic and religious figures. The three marble domes of the temple represent the three major religions of the country. The Birlas have thus attempted to keep the temple out of religious bigotry and made it a place of secular worship. **Albert Hall Museum** or the Central Museum, sited amid the gardens of Ram Niwas Bagh in Jaipur,

is one of the oldest museums in the state of Rajasthan. The Albert Hall Museum is modeled on the Albert Museum of London and represents the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture. This museum was designed by Colonel Sir Swinton Jacob in 1876 for the purpose of greeting King Edward VII, Prince of Wales on his visit to India. After ten years, it was opened to the public. Since 1969, the galleries on the ground floor of the museum have been thoroughly rebuilt and remodeled. Thus museum exhibits a rare collection of ancient stuffs including miniature paintings, carpets, metal and wood crafts, toys, dolls, arms and weapons and an Egyptian mummy belonging to the Ptolemaic Era. The most extraordinary of them is the carpet that depicts the scene of a Persian garden with gushing streams. This carpet was bought by Mirza Raja Jai Singh I at a dear price from Shah Abbas of Persia. The galleries on the ground floor of the museum display various jewelry and dresses that belong to the people of all sections of the society of Rajasthan. Thus there is an exhibition of the apparels of the privileged class consisting of the Rajputs and the wealthy merchants and the also the garments of the varied tribes of Rajasthan including the Bhils, Meenas, Bhopas, Gadoliya and

Lohars. While walking through this gallery one can have an insight of the culture and lifestyle of the Rajasthani tribes. One gallery of this museum is dedicated entirely to the illustrious henna body art of Rajasthan art and this gallery is known as 'Mehndi Mandana'. This gallery exhibits the typical Rajasthani patterns and motifs that are uniquely considered as ethnic throughout the world. Another gallery displays the puppets and the Phad paintings (portraiture of the life of a folk hero of Marwar -Pabuji Rathore in painted scrolls).

Back to Hotel. Overnight stay.

## Day 04

### Jaipur



After breakfast, visit the sprawling **Amber Fort** is a typical example of what the lives of our gallant Rajputs were like - militant, adventurous, temperamental and also self-indulgent. It is among the best hilltop forts in India. Within the stern exteriors that seem to grow out of the rugged hills are mighty gates, temples, huge ornate halls, palaces, pavilions, gardens and even a ramp to take you to the hilltop palace! and guess who climbs the ramp? Elephants. Yes, beautifully- caparisoned elephants go up and down carrying visitors to and fro. These well clad elephants make a joyride to Amber fort and in turn makes your travel to Amber fort a fascinating experience. This something which you cannot afford to miss in any Rajasthan travel. **Hawa Mahal** stands upright as the entrance to the City Palace, Jaipur. An important landmark in the city, Hawa Mahal is an epitome of the Rajputana architecture. The splendid five-storey "Palace of the Winds" is a blend of beauty and splendor much close to Rajasthan's culture. Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh built Hawa Mahal in 1779. The pyramid shape of this ancient monument is a tourist attraction having 953 small windows. This Mahal adjacent to the City Palace was for the royal women and girls of the palace. Sitting here, they could enjoy the air and have a city view. Lal Chand Usta built Hawa Mahal in pink sand stones keeping in mind the pink color of the other monuments in the city. Doomed canopies and the pyramid line of structure resemble that of Rajputana while the floral patterns are that of Mughal. Many tourists find it having a striking similarity with the Fatehpur Sikri. The main attraction in making of the Hawa Mahal is cooling chambers. **Jantar Mantar** at Jaipur is an observatory with architectural instruments for astronomical measurements and observations. Jantar comes from the word Yantra, which means an instrument. Mantar means formulae or calculations. So Jantar Mantar effectively means instruments and underlying formulae and calculations. Jantar Mantar at Jaipur is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Jantar Mantar was built by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II (1688-1743), who became the ruler of Amber at the age of 11 after his father's death. Maharaja Jai Singh had a great interest in mathematics, architecture and astronomy. He built five Jantar Mantar's in the cities of Delhi, Jaipur, Mathura, Varanasi and Ujjain during the years, 1724-1735. Of these, Jantar Mantar at Jaipur is the biggest and the best preserved. The city of Jaipur is named after Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh. **City Palace** is the one of the most famous king's palace in the world and a major

landmark in the Jaipur. It was built by the founder of Jaipur Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh. It has everything including beauty, design, architecture, show, royalness, stories and such other things that you can't ignore just to save your time. Once you enter in the City Palace, it starts to attract you

more and more towards itself with its charm. **The City Palace Museum** in Jaipur is divided into three sections namely textile museum, arms museum and art museum. As one enters the City Palace area, the first museum that falls on the way is the textile museum that houses a number of garments and ornaments worn by the kings and other members of the royal family in the departed era. The major highlight of this museum is a garment worn by Sawai Raja Madho Singh II. It is said that as he had a bigger body frame, the cloth used for this garment was 190 meters of cloth. Several bridal dresses of the women of the royal family and the ornaments worn by them are also put on a display. The polo uniform of Sawai Raja Maan Singh II is worth noticing. Another section that the City Palace Museum in Jaipur is famous for is the famous arms museum. You can see different kinds of daggers and pistols here. Pistols with double barrels, three barrels and four barrels are a major attraction at the museum. Other attractions at the museum include guns with extremely long barrels that could only be blown by keeping the barrels on the back of an elephant or a camel. Different varieties of swords, daggers, shields and guns make for the constituents of the arms museum at the City Palace museum in Jaipur. The third and the final section of the City Palace museum in Jaipur is worth visiting a lot of times as no one seems to have enough of it in one go. You can see a 3D painting of Sawai Ram Singh here that seems to be looking in your eyes no matter which side of the painting you are. Several photographs clicked by Sawai Ram Singh who was also the first photographer of the country have been kept here. Paintings that were made by Sawai Ishwar Singh using his fingernails are also worth a see at the museum. A number of paintings from different art schools and manuscripts of great epics like Mahabharata written on rice paper are also displayed in the museum.

Back to Hotel. Overnight stay.

### **Day 05**

**Jaipur>>Agra (235 Kms/04.5 Hours)**



After Breakfast, checkout and drive to Agra. Enroute visit **Fatehpur Sikri** built during the second half of the 16th century by the Emperor Akbar, Fatehpur Sikri (the City of Victory) was the capital of the Mughal Empire for only some 10 years. The complex of monuments and temples, all in a uniform architectural style, includes one of the largest mosques in India, the Jama Masjid. Fatehpur Sikri bears exceptional testimony to the Mughal civilization at the end of the 16th century. It offers a unique example of architectural ensembles of very high quality constructed between 1571 and 1585. Its form and layout strongly influenced the evolution of Indian town planning, notably at Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi). The 'City of Victory' had only an ephemeral existence as the capital of



the Mughal empire. The Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) decided to construct it in 1571, on the same site where the birth of his son, the future Jahangir, was predicted by the wise Shaikh Salim Chisti (1480-1572). The work, supervised by the great Mughal himself, was completed in 1573. In 1585, however, Akbar abandoned Fatehpur Sikri to fight against the Afghan tribes and choose a new capital, Lahore. Fatehpur Sikri was to be the seat of the great Mughal court only once more for three months in 1619, when Jahangir sought refuge there from the plague that devastated Agra. The site was then finally abandoned, until its archaeological exploration in 1892.

Arrive Agra. Check-in at Hotel. Overnight stay.

## Day 06

**Agra>>Jhansi>>Orchha**



After early breakfast, checkout and visit Taj Mahal. **(Friday Closed)** **Taj Mahal** was built by a grief stricken Emperor Shahjahan as a memorial to his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal. A world-renowned wonder, Taj Mahal

sits pretty on the northern side of this green paradise. It looks the same from all the four sides! The Quranic inscriptions on its four entrances are carved in such subtle increase in size that may appear to be of the same size from top to bottom! Shahjahan invited master craftsmen from as far as Italy and Persia to help design his ambitious tribute to love. The Taj Mahal is phenomenal not in the beauty alone that shines forth, but in the deep planning and design that went into its making, and the ethereal idea of immortalizing love. Delicate carvings in marble vie with gorgeous pietra dura for attention. Lapis-lazuli, Cornelian, Mother of pearl, Agate and Emerald are inlaid in floral and geometrical patterns in the marble itself. This enchanting mausoleum, on the bank of river Yamuna started in 1631 and it took 22 years to complete with the help of an estimated 20000 workers. Later visit **Agra Fort**. Near the gardens of the Taj Mahal stands the important 16th-century Mughal monument known as the Red Fort of Agra. This powerful fortress of red sandstone encompasses, within its 2.5-km-long enclosure walls, the imperial city of the Mughal rulers. It comprises many fairy-tale palaces, such as the Jahangir Palace and the Khas Mahal, built by Shah Jahan; audience halls, such as the Diwan-i-Khas; and two very beautiful mosques. The Red Fort and the Taj Mahal bear an exceptional and complementary testimony to a civilization which has disappeared, that of the Mogul Emperors. Agra's history goes back more than 2,500 years, but it was not until the reign of the Mughals that Agra became more than a provincial city. Humayun, son of the founder of the Mogul Empire, was offered jewellery and precious stones by the family of the Raja of Gwalior, one of them the famous Koh-i-Noor. The heyday of Agra came with the reign of Humayun's son, Akbar the Great. During his reign, the main part of the Agra Fort was built. The Red Fort of Agra is a powerful fortress founded in 1565 by the Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) on the right bank of the

Yamuna; it is placed today on the north-west extremity of the Shah Jahan Gardens which surround the Taj Mahal and clearly form, with them, a monumental unity.

This bastioned fortress, with walls of red sandstone rising above a moat and interrupted by graceful curves and lofty bastions, encompasses within its enclosure walls of 2.5 km, the imperial city of the Mogul rulers. Like the Delhi Fort, that of Agra is one of the most obvious symbols of the Mogul grandeur which asserted itself under Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

**Itmad-ud daulah**, one of the most beautiful of Mughal tombs, stands across the river Yamuna from the Taj Mahal, nearly one and a half kilometers up-stream. Belonging to the age of Jahangir, it contains cenotaphs of Mirza Ghiyas and Asmat Begum, parents of the powerful Mughal Empress Nurjahan queen of Jahangir, an exceptional beauty and an astute administrator. Mirza Ghiyas had left Persia in sheer penury in search of better prospects at the Mughal court. He benefited much from the influence of his daughter who he had once abandoned in the desert. Akbar offered him a good rank and privileges. Jahangir made him his prime minister with the title Itmad-ud-daulah (Pillar of the State). Nurjahan's brother Asaf Khan later became prime minister of Shahjahan. This Persian family formed at the Mughal court giving the grand Mughals two most celebrated queens- Nurjahan and Mumtaz Mahal (Lady of the Taj), daughter of Asaf Khan.

Drive to Rly.Station to take a train to Jhansi.

Arrive Jhansi, meet and transfer to **Orchha**. The history of Orchha is linked with the local Bundela rulers. It has a chequered history. The Bundela dynasty was founded by one of the local Rajput princes in the 11th century. Garkhurar was the earlier capital of the Bundelas. The Bundelas ruled the central part of India from Orchha, from 1531 to 1783. Raja Rudra Pratap moved the capital of the Bundelas to Orchha in 1531. The association of the Bundelas with the Mughals created many problems for the Bundelas. Bir Singh Deo, the ruler of Orchha from 1605-27, got into serious trouble with the great Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1602, when he was associated with Prince Jahangir, the son of Emperor Akbar. Mughal forces all but destroyed the state of the Bundelas. However, the situation changed in 1605, when Akbar died and Jahangir became the Mughal Emperor. In 1606, Emperor Jahangir visited Orchha. For the next 22 years until 1627, Bir Singh Deo had good relations with the Mughals. In 1627, when Shahjahan became the Mughal Emperor, Bir Singh revolted against the Mughals. However, this revolt was put down by Aurangzeb, the then 13-year old son of Shahjahan. Though the Mughals defeated the Bundelas, they revived their lost empire. In 1783, the Bundela rulers shifted their capital to Tikamgarh.

Check-in at Hotel. After lunch, visit **Orchha fort**, located on an island on River Betwa, having a number of palaces to visit within it. A four-arched bridge leads to the fort complex on the island. **The Jahangir Mahal**, which was built by Bir Singh Deo in the early part of the 17th century to mark the visit of the Mughal Emperor, is an important monument of this fort. It is known for its delicate work on one hand and balanced with strong masonry on the other. **Raj Mahal**, the second palace in this fort complex is well known for its murals, depicting

religious themes. **The Rai Parveen Mahal**, dedicated to the 17th-century poetess-musician, is the third palace within this complex and is set amongst well-laid gardens.

Back to Hotel. Overnight stay.

**Day 07**

**Orchha>>Khajuraho (178 Kms/2.5 Hours)**



After Breakfast, checkout and drive to Khajuraho. The City of **Khajuraho** is situated in the forested plains of Madhya Pradesh in the region known as Bundelkhand. Check-in. After Lunch, visit Khajuraho Temples are the most graphic, erotic and sensuous sculptures of India, the world has ever known Architecturally these temples are unique. While each temple in Khajuraho has a distinct plan and design, several features are common to all. They are all built on high platforms, several metres off the ground, either in granite or a combination of light sandstone and granite. Each of these temples has an entrance hall or mandapa, and a sanctum sanctorum or garbha griha. The roofs of these various sections have a distinct form. The porch and hall have pyramidal roofs made of several horizontal layers. The inner sanctum's roof is a conical tower - a colossal pile of stone (often 30m high) made of an arrangement of miniature towers called shikharas.

The famous Western group of temples are designated as the World Heritage Site and is enclosed within a beautifully laid out park. The Lakshmana and Vishwanath Temples to the front and The Kandriya Mahadev, Jagadami and Chitragupta Temples displays the best craftsmanship of Khajuraho.

Back to Hotel. Overnight stay.

## Day 08

### Khajuraho>>Varanasi



After breakfast, checkout by 10 am, transfer to Airport to take a flight to Varanasi. On arrival sightseeing tour of Sarnath one of the holiest Buddhist sites in the world, where Buddha preached his first Sermon in 590 B.C. Here you will witness the ruins of a once flourishing Buddhist monastery and then visit a fine Museum which houses an excellent collection of Buddhist art and sculptures found at the site.



**[Sarnath museum is closed on Friday]**

**Day 09**

**Varanasi>>Delhi**



After early Breakfast boat ride on the sacred river Ganges to see the cremation Ghats and witness the living traditions of one of the world's oldest and most important religions. Visit some of the many Hindu temples that line the river Ganges. Stroll along the narrow lanes and bazaars full of shops selling, among other things, the world famous Benaras Silks.

Back to Hotel and checkout. Drop to Airport to take a flight to Delhi.