INDIAN ESSENCE

23 October 2026 - 9 November 2026

Tour Cost ($AUD): $15,150

Tour Duration: 18 days

Single Supplement ($AUD): $4,490





OVERVIEW

Indian Essence is a spectacular 18-day journey to the historic and exotic cities of Rajasthan, and some of the less visited hidden gems in the north of India. Throughout the tour we stay at Indian Heritage hotels – typically properties that were formerly forts, palaces or traditional havelis – which have their own distinctive architecture, ambience and history. Step back in time and discover the glory of the great Mughal Empire and British Raj of India! We begin with a two-night stay in the capital, Delhi, before heading to the small town of Mandawa, a treasure trove of architectural grandeur in the heart of the Shekhawati region. Our next stop is Bikaner, one of the three great desert kingdoms of Rajasthan, which is renowned for its opulent havelis and the imposing Junagarh Fortress. From here we move on to mesmerising blue city of Jodhpur, where a sea of boxy blue houses stretches along the walls of the historic old city. The delightful town of Narlai is our next stop, before moving on to India's famous Lake City – Udaipur. Turning north we arrive at the charming city of Bundi, noted for its ancient step-wells, and its own unique style of Indian miniature painting. The fabled pink city of Jaipur is our next stop, before moving on to Bharatpur and its UNESCO heritage listed Keoladeo bird sanctuary and national park. The final destination on our remarkable discovery of the heritage and traditions of Northern India is Agra, home to the magnificent Taj Mahal!

Tour Fitness Level: Active

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TOUR MAP



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ITINERARY

23/10/2026 Australia – Singapore – Delhi

Check in at your chosen Australian airport for your flight to Singapore with Singapore Airlines.

Depart Singapore, Singapore Airlines SQ 406, 16.50

Arrive Delhi 20.10

After completing customs and immigration formalities in Delhi we transfer to our boutique heritage hotel.

The Claridges

Delhi

24/10/2026 Delhi (BLD)

A busy day today as we embark on an extensive sightseeing tour of Old and New Delhi. In the morning we visit Jama Masjid Mosque, and the colourful and exotic Chandni Chowk market, after we continue to the Red Fort for a photo stop before heading to Raj Ghat, the cremation site of Mahatma Gandhi. After lunch we continue our tour with a visit to, India Gate and Parliament House, before returning to our hotel for dinner.

25/10/2026 Delhi – Mandawa (BLD)

After breakfast we board our coach for the 260km drive to Mandawa. Located in the heart of the Shekhawati region, Mandawa is popularly known as the ‘open art gallery’, and is famed for its palaces and Haveli traditional houses decorated in unique frescoed wall paintings with themes of wedding and festivals. We take a walk along the narrow lanes of this quaint little town to explore this vibrant art and meet local people. We also visit the Mandawa street bazaar and Royal cenotaphs.

Castle Mandawa

Mandawa

26/10/2026 Mandawa – Bikaner (BLD)

This morning we make the three hour drive to the cultural paradise of Bikaner, situated in the midst of the Thar Desert. With sand dunes scattered across the city Bikaner offers an ancient opulence, with its rustic Junagarh Fortress and Palace made completely out of red sandstone. Nicknamed the ‘camel country of India’ Bikaner has some of the finest camel breeds and is home to the world’s largest camel breeding farm. On arrival in Bikaner we transfer to our heritage hotel, home for the next two nights.

Narendra Bhawan

Bikaner

27/10/2026 Bikaner (BLD)

Aptly named one of the three great desert kingdoms of Rajasthan, Bikaner boasts an old-world charm with its opulent havelis reflecting a bygone era. Today we set out on foot to explore these traditional old mansions, and soak up the distinct local lifestyle and arts and crafts scene.

28/10/2026 Bikaner – Jodhpur (BLD)

Leaving Bikaner behind, we move south to the fabled blue city of Jodhpur. En route we stop for lunch, and

on arrival into Jodhpur we check in to our beautiful heritage hotel.

Ajit Bhawan Palace

Jodhpur

29/10/2026 Jodhpur (BLD)

The mystical blue-washed town of Jodhpur sits at the foot of the legendary 15th Century Mehrangarh Fortress that dominates the skyline. After breakfast this morning we begin our tour of this fabled city, exploring its winding streets, ancient buildings, markets, and the fortress. Later we board local jeeps and take a 'tribal tour' of the Bishnoi Village, where we meet with locals and learn about their unique lifestyle, fine artwork and pottery making skills. As dusk approaches we continue our jeep safari to spot the rare flora and fauna around Guda Lake, including Indian blackbucks, blue bulls, and demoiselle cranes, before returning to our hotel.

30/10/2026 Jodhpur – Narlai (BLD)

Today we drive to the delightful heritage town of Narlai which sits alongside a mammoth granite rock that's dotted with caves and temples. This is a quiet and idyllic part of rural Rajasthan, and we take full advantage of everything it has to offer, with walking tours and jeep safaris. Late afternoon we head out on a sunset jeep safari around the town and to the lake, where hopefully we will spot some of the local birdlife as the sun goes down.

Rawla Narlai

Narlai

31/10/2026 Narlai (BLD)

After breakfast we embark on an exciting jeep safari in search of leopards, accompanied by a naturalist guide. Later we head into the town and surrounding countryside where we learn about the culture and lifestyle of the local artisans, farmers and priests. In the afternoon we stroll through the town and meet some of the locals who are proud and happy to be part of this close-knit community.

01/11/2026 Narlai – Udaipur (BLD)

This morning we board our coach for the drive south to Udaipur – India's famous Lake City. Shortly after leaving Narlai we arrive at the village of Ranakpur, where we stop to explore the sacred Jain Temples – an incredible complex of 29 white marble halls supported by 1,444 pillars, of which no two are the same. Re-boarding our coach we continue on to Udaipur. In the evening we enjoy dinner with fabulous views of the lake and the City Palace.

Trident Hotel

Udaipur

02/11/2026 Udaipur (BLD)

The imposing City Palace of Udaipur towers over the lake and is Rajasthan's largest palace with a façade almost 250 metres long and 30 metres high. Near the entrance to the palace, seven arches commemorate the seven maharajas whose weight in gold or silver was distributed to the lucky locals in times gone by. Today we set out on foot to explore the City Palace, the royal maidens' courtyard, and the Jagdish Temple which is dedicated to Lord Vishnu 'Protector of the Universe'. Late afternoon we enjoy a sunset boat cruise on Lake Pichola to see the sparkle of Udaipur

by night, and the famous Lake Palace.

03/11/2026 Udaipur – Bundi (BLD)

Today we journey north to Bundi, renowned for its picturesque forts and step-wells. We explore the famous Taragarh Fort, one of the most impressive forts in Rajasthan, and take a walking tour of Bundi Bazaar. We also visit the Sukhe Mahal, a small summer palace surrounded by terraced gardens where Rudyard Kipling once stayed.

Haveli Braj Bhushanjee

Bundi

04/11/2026 Bundi – Jaipur (BLD)

The fabled pink city of Jaipur is our destination today, and we set out after breakfast on the four-hour drive. A feast for all the senses, the old city of Jaipur was painted pink in 1876 – pink being the colour of hospitality – to welcome Britain's Prince of Wales on an official visit, and the tradition has been maintained. Our wonderful luxury heritage hotel, home for the next two nights, is located at Samode Village, a few kilometres from Jaipur.

The Raj Palace

Jaipur

05/11/2026 Jaipur (BLD)

A full heritage programme today as soak up the wonderful sights and sounds of Jaipur. We explore the UNESCO World Heritage listed Amber Fort, taking a jeep to reach its hilltop location, from where we have stunning views of the surrounding area. An underrated gem in Jaipur is the Wholesale Flower Market, known as the Phool Mandi, where farmers from the surrounding villages bring their freshly cut flowers, selling up to 50,000 kg per day. Perhaps the most distinctive landmark in the pink city is Hawa Mahal – the Palace of Winds – and we visit this remarkable pink-coloured beehive designed palace, which is an amazing example of Rajput artistry.

06/11/2026 Jaipur – Bharatpur - Agra (BLD)

This morning we board our coach for the four hour drive to Bharatpur. Just south of the city lies the UNESCO listed Keoladeo bird sanctuary and national park which has long been recognised as one of the world's most important bird breeding and feeding grounds, hosting more than 360 species within its 29 sq km. In the afternoon our expert naturalist escorts us through the park to see how many species we can spot before continuing onto Agra.

Grand Mercure Hotel

Agra

07/11/2026 Bharatpur – Agra (BLD)

Agra is located on the banks of the Holy River Yamuna, and home to one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World – the Taj Mahal. Built in memory of his beloved wife by Emperor Shah Jahan, this marble mausoleum is the greatest gesture of love known to mankind and is breathtakingly, bewitchingly beautiful. At the break of dawn we will experience a sunrise grand tour of The Taj Mahal including the beautiful garden and the outlying red sandstone buildings. Later this morning we will visit the Red Fort of Agra, a massive 16th-century Mughal fortress and UNESCO World Heritage Site located on the banks of the Yamuna River. As Dusk approaches we head to the riverside for a picturesque sunset viewing of this magnificent masterpiece of Mughal architecture.

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08/11/2026 Agra – Delhi (BL)

Morning at leisure After lunch we board our coach for the 230km drive to Delhi for our flight home

Depart Delhi Singapore Airlines SQ 403, 21.50

09/11/2026 Singapore – Australia

Arrive Singapore 06.00

On arrival in Singapore connect with your flight back to Australia.