
GEEO ITINERARY

X-India and Nepal 7/30/2023

Day 1: Delhi Arrive at any time.

Arrive in Delhi. For no extra cost, you will be picked up at the airport by Women on Wheels, a non-profit organization that trains Indian women from underprivileged backgrounds to get their professional chauffeur's license. Our tour operator employs all-female graduates to provide our travelers with safe and reliable transportation. We are proud to use our arrival transfers as a means of supporting local Indian women. Please note: if you are coming to Delhi before our trip begins and are staying at a different hotel than our starting hotel, we cannot provide you with this service. There are no planned activities until a welcome meeting around 6:00 p.m. for an orientation/overview to go over the details of your trip. Check the notice board in the hotel lobby to confirm the time and place of the meeting. Head out for an optional welcome dinner with the group. New Delhi, the capital of India, is one of the most historic capitals in the world, and three of its monuments – the Qutab Minar, the Red Fort, and Humayun's Tomb – have been declared World Heritage Sites. It offers a multitude of interesting places and attractions to the visitor, so much so that it becomes difficult to decide where to begin exploring the city. We cover some of the city's highlights on the second day of this trip, but we are just scratching the surface of Delhi during this trip. You might consider arriving early if you would like to see more. Beware, however, Delhi is chaotic and intimidating for seasoned and unseasoned travelers alike. In Old Delhi, there are attractions like mosques, forts, markets, and other monuments depicting India's Muslim history. New Delhi, on the other hand, is a modern city designed by Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker. Tree covered wide streets with many roundabouts are notable in New Delhi. Home to many government buildings and embassies, as well as Rashtrapati Bhawan, the one-time imperial residence of the British viceroys, and the India Gate, a memorial raised in honor of the Indian soldiers martyred during the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Further out in the southern suburbs you will discover more history, including: Humayun's Tomb, said to be the forerunner of the Taj Mahal in Agra; the Purana Quila, built by Humayun, with later-day modifications by Sher Shah Suri; Qutab Minar, built by Qutb-ud-din Aybak of the Slave Dynasty; and the incredible lotus-shaped Bahá'í House of Worship. There are a number of outstanding museums worth visiting including the Craft Museum, the National Gallery of Modern Art, Birla House (also known as "Gandhi Smriti"), and the Indira Gandhi Memorial Museum. Please note: Many museums are closed on Monday. If you are looking to try a range of Indian cuisines, consider visiting the delightful food stalls at Dilli Haat, where the cuisine of different states is available for purchase. Set amidst a spacious crafts bazaar, the cafes of Dilli Haat are a very pleasant place to enjoy food and take in the local culture.

Day 2: Delhi Full day city tour of Delhi including visits to the India Gate, Old Delhi Chandani Chowk area, Jama Masjid Mosque, Raj Ghat Ghandi Memorial and the Qutab Minar Complex. Make and eat Roti at Gurudwara Bangla Sahi Sikh Temple. (Itinerary may vary due to traffic and opening hours.)

Today, we get to see the sights of Delhi on a full-day guided tour with a local guide. You will ride an air-conditioned bus, although there will be ample walking around and taking a rickshaw. Itinerary will include: India Gate and the surroundings, Old Delhi Chandani Chowk area, Jama Masjid Mosque, Raj Ghat Ghandi Memorial and the Qutab Minar Complex. You will also visit Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, a Sikh temple and kitchen. The temple feeds thousands of people a day with everyone eating on the ground in a big hall. You will go into the kitchen and help roll out Roti, a type of Indian flatbread, to be served. Please keep in mind that Delhi traffic is unpredictable, so plans may need to be adjusted. Please note: Qutab Minar's entrance fee isn't included. Participants will pay 250 INR locally (roughly \$5 USD). Raj Ghat is occasionally closed to the public for official ceremonies.

Day 3: Delhi/Jaipur Travel to the "Pink City." Explore this beautiful city and opt to watch a Bollywood film.

Leaving the chaos of Delhi, we board our early morning air-conditioned bus to Jaipur, known as the "Pink

City." Jaipur was first painted terracotta pink by Maharajah Sawai Ram Singh in 1853, to celebrate the visit of Prince Albert. We will have an orientation walk and then have the option to take in a Bollywood film at the Raj Mandir, a spectacular art deco film house. Approximate travel time: 6 hrs by private vehicle

Day 4: Jaipur Marvel at the Amber Fort and Hawa Mahal. Opt to pre-book a cycle tour, visit a nearby village, or see the Jantar Mantar observatory.

This morning, we visit the Amber Fort, which clings to the surrounding hills, marveling at its beautiful Hindu and Muslim architecture. We then travel back to Jaipur to see the Hawa Mahal, or the "Palace of the Winds." This famous building is in fact only an elaborately carved facade built to enable the purdah ladies in the zenana to watch the goings-on in the street below without being seen. There are so many things to do in Jaipur, and you will have some free time to choose what is most of interest to you. You may want to explore by bicycle, which will introduce you to sights, sounds, and smells that a vehicle just can't match. Marvel at the architectural wonders as you enter the walled part of the city and stop at the City Palace to visit the Govind Dev temple. Wander through the historical spices and sweets market, stopping for tea and a tasty snack of pakoras before heading towards the majestic Albert Hall Museum where the cycle tour ends. You might instead prefer to head out to the nearby village of Sanganer to see blue pottery, handmade paper, or hand-block printing. Or you may wish to discover more of the wisdom and history of the Mughals by wandering around the Jantar Mantar, an observatory built in the 1700s. We also recommend visiting the courtyards, gardens, and buildings that make up the City Palace. Located in the heart of the Old City, it is a striking blend of Mughal and Rajasthani architecture. Visit the palace's museum to look at ancient carriages and the former maharaja's gold-embroidered wedding outfit. Jaipur is one of the most important centers in the world for gems, jewelry, and small diamonds. It is also a great place to buy block-printed textiles, blue pottery, and handmade paper. There are many shops selling these items and some wonderful markets in the Old City selling more traditional items such as mojari, Rajasthani slippers. If buying gems or jewelry, please take caution as there have been several instances of scams where fake jewelry has been passed off as real.

Day 5: Agra Travel to Agra. At sunset, see the world-famous Taj Mahal.

Travel to the city of Agra, site of India's most famous landmark, the Taj Mahal. Visit this icon of Mughal architecture in the late afternoon for the best light. The Taj Mahal was constructed between 1631 and 1654 by a workforce of 22,000 laborers. It was built by the Muslim Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his favorite wife, Arjumand Bano Begum, better known as Mumtaz Mahal. Mumtaz had already borne the emperor 14 children when she died in childbirth, and it is the romantic origin of the Taj as much as its architectural splendor that has led to its fame worldwide. Actually an integrated complex of many structures, the Taj Mahal is considered the finest example of Mughal architecture, itself a combination of Islamic, Hindu, Persian, and Turkish elements. Approximate travel time: 6 hrs by private vehicle

Day 6: Orchha Enjoy the peaceful rural charm of Orchha and visit the Orchha Palace complex. Opt to witness an evening puja.

Today, we travel by train from Agra to Jhansi before jumping in a tempo, a large auto-rickshaw, to the picturesque town of Orchha. You will love the peaceful rural charm of this riverside town. Sitting on the banks of the Betwa River, Orchha is the perfect antithesis India's bustling cities. Experience a part of India that will likely change your perception of this diverse country. A typical, small Indian town, Orchha owes its popularity to an architectural heritage that shows the town's history as the oldest and highest in rank of all the Bundela states. Orchha dates back to the 16th century when it was founded by the Bundela chief Rudra Pratap. In the early 17th century, Raja Jujhar Singh rebelled against the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, whose armies devastated the state and occupied Orchha from 1635 to 1641. Orchha was the only Bundela state not subjugated by the Marathas in the 18th century. Hamir Singh, who ruled from 1848 to 1874, was elevated to Maharaja in 1865. Maharaja Pratap Singh, who succeeded to the throne in 1874, devoted himself entirely to the development of his state, including designing most of the engineering and irrigation works built during his reign. We will visit the Orcha Palace complex, which is three separate palaces or *mahals*: the Raj Mahal, Jehangir Mahal, and Rai Parveen Mahal. Enjoy

the medieval architecture and learn about its rich history. In the evening, if you wish, you may join an evening puja, a Hindu prayer ceremony. Approximate travel time: 2.5 hrs by train (Agra to Jhansi); 1.5 hrs by auto-rickshaw (Jhansi to Orchha)

Day 7: Orchha/Varanasi Visit Tarragram, a unique paper-making plant. Enjoy free time in Orchha. Opt for a bike rental or take a cooking class and have lunch with a local family. Catch an overnight train to Varanasi.

We will start the day with a visit to Tarragram, a unique paper-making plant that is set up to assist tribal women from the area. All the paper here is made from recycled clothing and wood pulp. You can opt to rent a bike from a local shop and head out to explore. Or you can take a cooking class with a local family and enjoy the fruits of your labor for lunch. This home-cooked meal is a real highlight and is highly recommended by past participants. In the evening, you will return to Jhansi, where you will board an overnight train to Varanasi. See our FAQ to learn more about the overnight train, which is an essential Indian experience and a great way to see the landscape. Approximate travel time: 30 mins by auto-rickshaw (Orchha to Jhansi); 13 hrs by overnight train (Jhansi to Varanasi)

Day 8: Varanasi Arrive in the holy city of Varanasi. Take an orientation walk along the ghats and visit the old city. Enjoy a boat trip on the Ganges at sunset. Optional visit to silk factory.

We arrive in the morning at Varanasi, the quintessential Indian holy city, where millions of Hindus travel for pilgrimage, to worship, to mourn, or to die. The legends, myths, and aura surrounding Varanasi led Mark Twain to remark famously that the city "is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together." Sitting on the banks of the River Ganges, you can contemplate what it means to be in Varanasi, the oldest continually-inhabited city in the world, dating back thousands of years. The culture of Varanasi is deeply associated with the Ganges River, its reigning deity Lord Shiva, and its religious importance: the city has been a cultural and religious center in northern India for thousands of years. When we first arrive, we will have an orientation walk along the ghats and through the old city, filled with temples, shrines, and Hindus from all over India and the world. Enjoy views of the sacred River Ganges. During your free time after the orientation walk, you might choose to visit some of the hundreds of temples and shrines, such as the Lord Hanuman Temple Visit honoring the Hindu monkey-god, Hanuman. Perhaps you could visit the monasteries and ruins of nearby Sarnath, the site of Buddha's first sermon and one of the most holy sites to Buddhists. It is said that, after attaining enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, Buddha continued to Sarnath. In a deer park, he preached his first discourse and set in motion the Wheel of the Dharma. During our stay, we take an evening boat tour on the sacred Ganges River and participate in a candle and flower ceremony while on the water. Please note: Varanasi can be a difficult city to visit, even for an experienced traveler. Varanasi requires patience and an open mind, but it is worth it!

Day 9: Varanasi Take a sunrise boat tour on the Ganges. Enjoy free time.

Today, we wake up early and catch the sunrise during another boat ride on the sacred Ganges River, where Hindu pilgrims from all over the world come to wash away their sins and cremate their loved ones. Witness locals participating in dawn rituals of bathing and burning at the river. You will then have more free time to explore this holy city.

Day 10: Lumbini Cross into Nepal and visit Buddha's birthplace, Lumbini.

Today, we have a long travel day as we cross into Nepal. Enjoy the changing landscape and get ready to learn about the history and culture of Nepal. You will receive a Nepalese visa at the border, but you will need \$30 USD in crisp, new bills. Also be aware that Nepal is 15 minutes ahead of India. After completing the immigration formalities in both India and Nepal, we will drive to Lumbini, the historical birthplace of Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, who lived between approximately 563 and 483 BCE. Lumbini is located 25 km east of the municipality of Kapilavastu, the place where the Buddha grew up and lived up to the age of 29. We will explore some of the numerous monasteries in this UNESCO World Heritage

Site. Approximate travel time: 6 hrs by train; 2-3 hrs by taxi; 30 mins-1 hr by private vehicle.

Day 11: Lumbini/Chitwan National Park Travel to Chitwan National Park. Experience the culture of the indigenous Tharu community. Opt to go on a cycling excursion through the area. Stay at a jungle resort.

Travel through a region that is home to rhinos, elephants, Bengal tigers, bears, and leopards. In the evening, meet the local Tharu community and discover their culture. Experience their culture through dance and song, along with a traditional meal. Opt to go on a cycling excursion through the area. After breakfast, we will drive through a belt of marshy grasslands, savannas, and forests at the base of the Himalayas to Chitwan National Park, another UNESCO World Heritage site. We will be welcomed by the indigenous tribal group of Chitwan, the Tharus. In the evening, we interact with the local Tharu community and experience their culture through dance and song along with a traditional meal. The Tharus are an indigenous community of the Terai belt of Nepal and work toward living self-sufficiently. They live in eco-friendly homes made of mud, straw, and other materials found in abundance in the region. They also produce and farm all their own food. We will stay overnight in a jungle resort. Approximate travel time: 4-5 hours by private vehicle

Day 12: Chitwan National Park (D) Explore the park on a 4x4 safari before a walk through the village and rice paddies.

Today, we will explore the diverse ecosystems of Chitwan National Park, formerly the "Royal Chitwan National Park," from the comfort of a 4x4 vehicle. Keep your eyes peeled for the many animals that live there, including birds, monkeys, crocodiles, and rhinos. If you're lucky, you might even see an elusive tiger. Keep in mind that sometimes the wildlife is hard to spot, so keep your expectations low. We will stay overnight in a jungle resort.

Day 13: Chitwan/Pokhara Travel to the Annapurna Range in Pokhara.

Travel from the plains to the mountains by private vehicle. Nestled in a tranquil valley at an altitude of 827 m, Pokhara is a place of natural beauty. The serenity of Phewa Lake and the magnificence of the fish-tailed summit of Machhapuchhre (6,977 m) rising behind it create an ambiance of peace and tranquility. We will have an orientation walk in Pokhara led by your tour leader. Pokhara lies on a once vibrant trade route extending between India and Tibet. To this day, mule trains can be seen camped on the outskirts of the town, bringing goods to trade from remote regions of the Himalayan mountain range. This enchanting city has several beautiful lakes and offers stunning panoramic views of the surrounding peaks, creating an ambiance that makes it such a popular place to relax and enjoy the beauty of nature. Relax in a café, hire a boat to float around the lake, or shop for Nepali and Tibetan souvenirs in the endless stalls and shops. Approximate travel time: 5-6 hrs by private vehicle

Day 14: Pokhara (L) Visit nearby Sarangkot for a sunrise walk. Visit the Sisterhood of Survivors Project. Explore Pokhara during free time in the afternoon.

This morning, we travel to Sarangkot (1,592 m) only 5 km northeast of Pokhara, for a spectacular sunrise of the surrounding mountains (weather permitting). The most stunning of Pokhara's sights is the spectacular panorama of the Annapurna range, which will dominate the scenery during the walk. The walk also takes you back to Pokhara through farms and forests and is a wonderful way to spend 2-2.5 hours. After the walk, we visit the Sisterhood of Survivors Project, a G Adventures-supported grassroots organization that is helping to support rehabilitated survivors of human-trafficking and other at-risk women. SASANE, our project partners, trains once vulnerable women to be certified paralegals, so that they are the first point of contact for other women coming out of abuse. G Adventures has helped catalyze a hospitality program for these women to be reintegrated into a dignified work environment. The survivors will teach you how to make momos (traditional dumplings) and then enjoy a Nepali lunch together. This program helps support SASANE's trafficking prevention and re-integration programs across Nepal. In the afternoon, you have free time to explore Pokhara on your own.

Day 15: Kathmandu Fly to Kathmandu. Enjoy an orientation walk and a trip to the Swayambhunath Temple (Monkey Temple).

Today, we travel by airplane to Nepal's magical capital and largest city, Kathmandu. For many, simply the name alone is sufficient to conjure up images of temple pagodas, long-haired sadhus in clouds of hashish smoke, and the ever-present Himalayas. Kathmandu is all this and more. Sitting in a bowl-like valley surrounded on all sides by some of the highest mountains on earth, Kathmandu has been a crossroads of cultures since hundreds of years before Christ, a tradition very much alive today. Upon arriving in Kathmandu, we will enjoy a short orientation walk. As a group, we will visit Swayambhunath Temple (Monkey Temple). Highlights in Kathmandu include world-famous Durbar Square, the King's Palace, the burning ghats at Pashupatinath, and the Boudhanath Stupa. Approximate travel time: 30 mins by airplane

Day 16: Kathmandu Enjoy a day tour of Bhaktapur and Patan.

Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur constitute the valley's three medieval Newari cities. Today, our group will go on a guided tour of Bhaktapur and Patan. Bhaktapur is the best preserved of the three cities, with incredibly well-preserved ancient architecture, much of which withstood a devastating earthquake in 2015. The ancient town, known as the City of Devotees, was founded in the 12th century and became renowned for its culture, festivals, and multitude of Hindu temples. Explore Bhaktapur's markets, tea stalls, wood-carved temples, and vibrant squares, including Durbar Square. You can pick up clay pots and other souvenirs in the colorful open markets and taste homemade yogurt, known as khopa dhau, which Bhaktapur is famous for. We will also visit Patan's Durbar Square and the Golden Temple. South of the square lies the Kumari Chowk, home to Nepal's living goddess, the Kumari. The Kumari, a prepubescent girl chosen as the incarnation of the Hindu goddess Talejn, lives a cloistered life, rarely leaving the confines of the chowk. When she does leave, it is only for important religious festivals, and her feet are not allowed to touch the ground. Once the Kumari reaches puberty, another 3- to 5-year-old girl will take her place. Approximate travel time: 1 hr by private vehicle

Day 17: Depart Kathmandu Depart Kathmandu at any time.

Our tour ends today. You are free to depart at any time today, though your accommodation is only till noon. Please note: If your flight is before 2:00 p.m., you will not have time for an optional Mount Everest flight in the morning. (See optional activities section below for more information on this possibility.) Want more adventure? Book two or more GEE0 trips in the same year and receive a discount! GEE0 will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs). If you don't see a program that interests you that pairs with this trip, but still would like to extend your time abroad, let us know. We will work with you to find a non-teacher trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Even better, if you are an educator we can still offer you a discounted price on the trip you choose!