

# Agra, Varanasi and the Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj

Trip Code: PXKM

Version:



PIONEER



GUIDED GROUP



LEISURELY



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Three nights, two days at the Kumbh Mela, staying at a fixed camp on the festival site
- Experience the magical aarti ceremony on the banks of the Ganges at Varanasi
- Visit Agra's incomparable Taj Mahal at sunrise

## ■ Sarnath, Chunnar Fort, Ayodhya and a day of sightseeing in Lucknow

### AT A GLANCE

- 12 days touring and sightseeing
- Join at Delhi

### ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

## Introduction

The Maha Kumbh Mela, celebrated every twelve years in the north Indian city of Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad) is the biggest and most colourful religious gathering on Earth with millions of Hindu pilgrims expected to attend the event in January 2025. Timed according to the relative astrological positions of Jupiter, the sun and the moon, the festival is marked for many by a ritual dip in the waters at the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Sarasvati rivers. The devout believe that bathing in this place and at this time cleanses them of their sins. This sensational holiday includes 3 nights and 2 full days at the Kumbh Mela at the peak of the festival. Staying at a comfortable, private fixed camp at the heart of the showground, this will provide a unique opportunity to experience one of the greatest shows on Earth. There are sideshows, fairs, street vendors, strolling players and storytellers, sadhus and holy men, followers of a bewildering array of different Hindu deities. Naked, ash-covered Naga sadhus as well as Urdhwavahurs, Parivajakas, Shirshasins and Kalpvasis, each with their own devotional practices, will vie for your attention.

But there's more to this holiday than the Kumbh Mela. We start out with a day of sightseeing amongst the temples and bazaars of Delhi, before taking the early Vande Bharat Express train to Varanasi, where we will attend the candle-lit aarti ceremony that takes place each evening on the ghats beside the Ganges. We will also take a boat ride on the river at dawn on the following morning to observe the pilgrims as they come to bathe in the holy waters. Nearby Sarnath and the impressive Chunar Fort are also on our tick-list as we make our way to Prayagraj. Then, after our time at the Kumbh Mela, we will visit Ayodhya on the banks of Saryu River (another Hindu holy place) and spend a day at Lucknow, the City of Nawabs, sacred to people of the Muslim faith. Finally, we will visit Agra and experience both the magic of the Taj Mahal at dawn and the sheer presence of the commanding, red sandstone Agra Fort.

A holiday for those seeking complete sensory immersion into the fascinating cultural and religious experience that is northern India.

### Is this holiday for you?

This touring and sightseeing adventure holiday incorporates some of the highlights of northern India into just less than 2 weeks and provides a taste of the Subcontinent's amazing culture, history and religious pageantry. There is a fair amount of travelling, as we journey between Delhi, Varanasi, Prayagraj and Agra. However, using a private, air-conditioned minibus, the effect of this is kept to a minimum. The holiday includes some quite leisurely exploration of city streets and cultural sites in foot.

# Itinerary

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Version:

## Holiday Information

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### What's Included

- A professional English-speaking local leader
- Delhi Airport group transfers on the arrival and departure days
- All land transport involved in the itinerary
- All accommodation as described
- Meals as detailed in the Meal Plan
- Park and monument entrance fees
- Guided sightseeing during two days at the Kumbh Mela
- Guided sightseeing tours in Delhi Varanasi Lucknow and Agra

### What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Delhi Airport transfers (other than group transfers) on arrival and departure days
- Indian Visa
- Tips for local staff
- Some meals as detailed in the Meal Plan

### Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at at the hotel in Delhi on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary.

A single group transfer is provided from Delhi Airport on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary and back to the same airport on the final day of the Land Only itinerary.

Anyone may join the group transfers by prior arrangement. Travelling as a group or on public transport saves energy. If this is not practical, we can provide private transfers at an additional cost. Taxis are also available.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

## Meal Plan

There is a total of 13 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 3 dinners included. The tour guide will accompany the group for all meals, both at the group hotels and at other cafes and restaurants, and will if needed assist with choosing and ordering meals at those places where you will pay directly. This arrangement of included meals means you are to a greater extent free to choose what you want to eat and can take full advantage of the excellent Indian food on offer.

## Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. You should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

Part of the experience of a visit to India is sampling the excellent local food. Indian cuisine offers a wide choice of dishes, much more variety than the 'curries' we are used to in Indian restaurants at home and the naan breads are like nothing you'll have experienced. Whether the food is presented as a dinner buffet or as a set menu, there will always be vegetarian options. In some place, there will also be familiar international dishes. Breakfasts include cereals, bread, possibly in the form of local 'rotis', eggs, hard-boiled or omelette, often one or two delicious, spicy Indian breakfast options, fruit, juice, hot water for tea or coffee. Lunches will usually be at a restaurant where you can choose what you want - the guide will help with this.

## Accommodation

We will have a 9 nights in neat and tidy tourist-class hotels (generally 3-star) in Delhi, Varanasi, Ayodhya, Lucknow and Agra. There are also 3 nights at a private tented camp at the Kumbh Mela location in Prayagraj where the accommodation is twin-share with proper beds and bedding, private toilet facilities including hot running water with shower and towels. The tents have electricity, lighting and carpeted floors and are lockable. Meals at the camp are included and taken in a separate dining tent. All accommodation is allocated on a twin-sharing basis. If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired up with another single client of the same sex. Depending upon availability it may be possible to arrange single rooms for the hotel nights. For hotel prices and single supplement costs please refer to the dates and prices page of the trip on our website.

## Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be accompanied by an experienced professional leader throughout and specialist cultural guides will be brought in when sightseeing in Delhi, Varanasi, Lucknow and Agra, and during the time the group spends at the Kumbh Mela. There will also be a private, air-conditioned vehicle and driver for all road transfers.

## Spending Money

Approximately £400 (or the equivalent in US dollars or euros) should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including the meals you will pay for directly, as well as tips for your guides (allow approximately £80-£100) and for beer, soft drinks, etc. There will be opportunities to buy souvenirs on this trip. It is not necessary to purchase local currency (Indian Rupees) before you travel. Sterling, US dollars and euros are readily exchanged in Delhi. Since you will be changing the majority of your spending money into local currency during the first couple of days in Delhi, we recommend taking this in cash. Credit cards can be used to purchase many goods in the cities and are particularly useful for more expensive souvenirs. It is possible to withdraw cash (rupees only) from cash machines in certain banks in the cities using credit and debit cards.

## Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is an accepted and expected part of Indian culture, although you should only tip for services which are well done. We recommend that tips to your guides and driver be made from the group as a whole and that the group decides together on an appropriate amount. Your guide will help with sundry tipping; bell boys, other hotel staff, toilet attendants, lunchtime restaurant staff, festival staff and railway porters. This means you don't need to concern yourself with who to tip and who not to tip. Your guide will set up a tip 'kitty' for this and you will probably be asked to contribute 4000 rupees (£40) each for this at the start of the trip. Separately from this, you will need to tip the driver who will be with you for much of the trip. And you will need to tip your guide. As a rough guide we suggest that £80-£100 per person (depending on group size) will allow you to pay reasonable tips.

## Baggage Allowance

You should restrict your luggage to one main travel bag plus a small daypack to carry cameras, binoculars, water etc. A robust holdall or a piece of luggage fitted with wheels is appropriate for this kind of trip.

## Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

# General Information

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## Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

## Visa India

Most nationalities, including travellers from the UK, the USA and many European countries can apply for their Indian Visa online through the **E-Visa Application** process. You must make your application at least four days prior to departure. Please download the detailed information document for details of how to apply for your visa: [Visa India PDF](#)

## Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

## VACCINATIONS

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations or other preventive measures. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella, along with hepatitis A and typhoid. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

Dengue fever is a known risk in places visited. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you [take precautions to avoid mosquito bites](#).

Zika virus has been confirmed as active in this country. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites. The mosquitoes that transmit ZIKV are unlikely to be found above 2,000m altitude. For more information, visit the website of the National Travel Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) at <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk>



## Currency

The currency of India is the Indian Rupee.

## Climate

Early in the year in northern India it will be dry and pleasantly cool with maximum daytime temperatures of around 20 degrees centigrade and nighttime temperatures dropping as low as 10 degrees centigrade. It is a great time of year to visit.

## Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at [travelaware.campaign.gov.uk](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

## Books

- India - Lonely Planet
- Guide India - The Rough Guide
- The Kumbh Mela - Mark Tulley
- Kumbha: The Traditionally Modern Mela - Nityananda Misra

## Maps

- India North West - Reise Know-How Verlag. 1:1,300,000
- India North East - Reise Know-How Verlag. 1:1,300,000

## Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

# Equipment Information

## Equipment List

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As a general rule, you should always try to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum.

### Please bring the following items:

- Comfortable walking shoes or trainers
  
- Lightweight walking trousers
  
- Light, long-sleeved shirt with collar)
  
- Light waterproof jacket
  
- Light fleece jumper or jacket
  
- Casual clothing for evenings
  
- Travel clothes
  
- Sunhat
  
- Sunglasses
  
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)



- Small daypack 20 to 25 litres
- Water bottles 1 litre (x2)
- Water purification tablets
- Washbag and toiletries
- Antibacterial handwash

■ Basic First Aid Kit including: antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), painkillers, plasters (band-aids), insect repellent, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite).

- Camera
- Travel clothes
- Swimwear (optional)
- Pocket knife and repair kit (optional)

## Cotswold Outdoor

Many of the equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive a 12.5% discount with Cotswold Outdoor, Snow+Rock and Runners Need. The discount code can be downloaded from your MyKE account and you can use this code at the checkout, either in store or online.

## Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary starting at the hotel in Delhi. A single group transfer is provided from Delhi Airport on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary and back to the airport on the final day of the Land Only itinerary.

## Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Delhi. Outbound flights will usually depart from the UK in the evening, arriving in Delhi in the morning on the following day (Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary). Return flights will depart Delhi on the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later the same day.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 21/11/2024 and the trip is subject to change