



Stan Bowley Cycle Rajasthan 2024



Duration: 10 days

India offers a broad diversity of landscapes, people and wildlife, with an incredible mix of colourful cultures and a sense of history at every turn.

We travel to the desert state of Rajasthan, India's largest state, where our exciting ride takes us through an historic area known for its characteristic old forts, painted houses and maharajah's palaces – some of which we stay in overnight. Trip highlights include the Pink City of Jaipur (recently awarded UNESCO World Heritage status), Ranthambore National Park, and the old abandoned city of Fatehpur Sikri. We then celebrate our achievements at India's most iconic monument, the graceful Taj Mahal.

The long hot days in the saddle make for a demanding trip, but there are plenty of rewards for your efforts along the way! This is a truly unforgettable experience.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Depart London

Day 2: Arrive Delhi, drive to Jaipur

We arrive and meet our vehicles for the drive to Jaipur, capital of Rajasthan. The drive alone gives us a great introduction to India's culture as we relax and watch the world go by, with a stop for lunch along the way. We freshen up at the hotel before dinner. Night hotel.

Drive approx 5 hours

Day 3: Jaipur

Jaipur is known as the Pink City because of the terracotta colour of many of its buildings, and we spend a whole day exploring its many sights. The setting for 'The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel' films, it's a fascinating city and gives us a good cultural introduction to India, whose frenetic and vibrant street-scenes assault the senses wonderfully but can be a shock to the system! We visit Amber Fort, a magnificent ornately-decorated hill-top fort perched above the city; there are stunning views. Look out for monkeys playing on the fort walls! We also have time to visit the famous Observatory, or Jantar Mantar – a UNESCO World Heritage Site – and the City Palace, and see the striking Hawa Mahal, or 'Palace of the Winds', which is actually just a facade. Heading back to our hotel, we have time to check our bikes and prepare our kit before dinner and a full briefing. Night hotel.

Day 4: Jaipur – Jamwa Ramgarh – Bhanderej After an energising breakfast, we set out on our Rajasthan adventure! After an hour's transfer out of the busy city, we unload the bikes and start pedalling. Heading out into the countryside, we are able to appreciate the scenery around us: beautiful green-brown hills surround us, dotted with small trees and scrub, hill-top forts silhouetted against the sky. The roads are fairly quiet now, but we'll see bicycles, motorcycles and camels pulling carts laden with all manner of produce. We head east to the 11th-century village of Bhanderej, passing small villages and plots of farmland. Our route is predominantly flat, but it's a long, hot day of cycling! A short transfer will take us the last 15km to our hotel, unless our group pace allows us time to ride the whole distance. We stay in a wonderful Maharaja's palace. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 75km (or 90km) / 5 – 6 hours; drive approx 1 hour

Day 5: Bhanderej – Lalsot – Ranthambore National Park

Our route today follows trails made by the many pilgrims, traders and armies whose journeys reflect the rich cultural history of this region. We follow small roads and tracks through villages and agricultural land, passing Hindu settlements, temples and shrines, and start to gain a real insight into the way of local life. Photogenic blue-painted Brahmin houses stand out from the natural colours of the land: Brahmins are the high priestly rank of the caste system. Vibrantly-clad children wave to us as we pass their houses and brightly-coloured truck-buses pass us, passengers riding on the roofs. We reach a larger road and follow it to the town of Lalsot, where we load up in the vehicles for the last 50km to Ranthambore National Park – famous for its magnificent tigers and the Project Tiger conservation project. There are many other species living here, including sambar, cheetah, wild boar, leopard, sloth bear, jackal and hyena. We stay in a hotel just outside the Park. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 70km / 5 – 6 hours; drive approx 1.5 hours

Day 6: Ranthambore National Park – Karauli Our day starts with an exciting safari into Ranthambore National Park, where we can spot wildlife from canters (open minibuses). Formerly a hunting ground for Maharajas, the National Park is one of Rajasthan's few areas of lush jungle and grassland and forms a great contrast to the landscapes we have seen so far. The terrain is diverse with open bush, dense forest, grassland and jungle, and we can enjoy the views of the surrounding steep craggy hills while keeping alert for signs of wildlife. If we are very lucky we may see a tiger basking in the sun or ambling down a track. After our safari is over, we leave the green forest behind and head off on our bikes on small tarmac roads through scenic villages and fields growing crops and fruit. We arrive in lovely Karauli, an ancient holy city dotted with bright blue buildings and home to an impressive palace – we should have plenty of time to explore. Night hotel.

Day 7: Karauli – Bharatpur

We continue our Indian adventure, heading north over hillier terrain through more villages and towns. We'll be more used to the sights around us now, and we gain a greater insight into the lives of the local people with every mile that we pedal! The landscapes we ride through become more agricultural, and we pass more small villages and people tending crops on the cultivated land. The diverse scenes of local life become one of the highlights of the trip for most people. We drive the last section to our hotel. If we have enough time (and energy!) we can then ride to the nearby Keoladeo National Park, home to hundreds of bird species. In order to preserve the park and wildlife, bicycles are the only vehicle permitted – and the best way to explore the water marshes which attract thousands of water birds. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 75km / 5 – 6 hours; drive approx 1 hour

Day 8: Bharatpur – Fatehpur Sikri – Agra

We set off, enjoying our last morning's cycle through picturesque rural India, with its fascinating villages, waving children, and colourful traffic. We are heading to the impressive 'ghost' city of Fatehpur Sikri. Capital of the Mughal Empire, it was built in the 16th century and abandoned little more than 10 years afterwards. Now its almost-perfectly-preserved sandstone buildings, which include mosques, palaces and living areas, allow a unique glimpse into the civilisation – and an impressive backdrop for our grand finale group photos! We then load up onto the vehicles and leave the city's rocky ridge as we drive towards Agra on busier roads through more built-up areas. Agra itself is a huge, modern city with some beautiful historic landmarks – the most famous of which is the iconic Taj Mahal, which we'll visit tomorrow. At our hotel we can wash off the dust and relax! Night hotel.

Day 9: Taj Mahal; Agra – Delhi

The Taj Mahal at sunrise is an unmissable experience and a wonderful finale to our Indian challenge. This incredible monument – built by the Emperor Shah Jahan as a memorial to his wife in the 17th century – changes hue as the sun grows stronger and the shadows recede. We have plenty of time to explore and soak up the peaceful atmosphere. We then drive back to Delhi and celebrate our amazing achievement with an evening of celebrations. Night hotel.

Drive approx. 5 hours

Day 10: Depart Delhi

Enjoy a more leisurely start than we've been used to, then we transfer to the airport for our flight home.

[Lunch not included if not in-flight]

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All return transport from London to Jaipur / Delhi to London
- All meals except where specified and accommodation
- Rapid fire gear shifters front suspension mountain bike
- Discover Adventure leaders/mechanic
- Local support and back-up equipment
- Entry to Taj Mahal and any other sites included in the itinerary

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Any meals specified 'not included' in the itinerary
- Cycle helmet (compulsory) and water bottles
- Travel insurance
- India entry visa
- Personal spending money, souvenirs and drinks
- Tips for local guides and support crew
- Inbound airport departure tax (no tax applied at the time of writing)
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions



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Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 16 Apr 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.