



India Rajasthan 14 daags programma

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

- DELHI India's vibrant, historical capital.
- UDAIPUR Stunning lakeside city.
- KUMBALGARH Imposing hilltop citadel and one of the finest examples of defensive architecture in Rajasthan.
- RANAKPUR Exquisite 15th century Jain Temples.
- JODHPUR Rajasthan's formidable desert city.
- RURAL TRAILS Cycling through the traditional heartland of the "Land of the Maharajahs".
- JAIPUR Pink City famous for Forts, Palaces & Markets
- AGRA City of TAJ MAHAL

The romance and color of Rajasthan has long captivated the traveler, its exotic mix of sights and sounds blending perfectly with the elegant grandeur of its magnificent cities and temples. This comprehensive journey through the desert state affords us the unique opportunity to explore both its most spectacular monuments and its traditional heartland by bike, allowing us an insight into the very essence of India's cultural heart. Beginning our journey in the streets of India's pulsating capital, we have an opportunity to discover something of Delhi's

Mughal and colonial past, before an overnight train takes us towards the white marble palaces of Udaipur, the beautiful lakeside city of the Rajputs. With time to explore something of its sumptuous beauty we take to our bikes, following the network of lanes that meander through the old city and out towards the pretty Aravalli Hills. We visit the imposing citadel of Kumbhalgarh and enjoy a ride through the wildlife sanctuary that nestles beneath its dominating shadow. Then, continuing our journey, we head to the village of Ranakpur and the intricately sculptured Jain temples that make it one of Rajasthan's hidden gems. Traversing a landscape that takes us along quiet rural roads we discover the true traditions of this beautiful region, passing villages whose timeless simplicity presents us with a dazzling array of color and noise, affording an insight into the real India. Then after visiting the impressive Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur, our journey takes us full circle, back to the vibrant streets of Delhi for one last chance to immerse ourselves in its eclectic fusion of the old and the new, before we head for home.

This trip is rated **Grade B**

Our bicycles are 21 Shimano geared Trek 4300 mountain bikes. Cycling is mostly on the flat 60% asphalt, 40% unsealed village tracks, which can be quite sandy making the going tough.



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A Support vehicle follows each day of the cycling and any rides/part rides, can be opted out of. Cycling Grades Grading is a somewhat difficult topic as much depends on the individuals own perception of his or her abilities. The following is intended as a general guide to our cycling grades.

This is rated Grade B. Grade B (Moderate): Generally cycling on the flat and in hilly terrain with occasional steeper ascents and descents.

These trips are suitable for more frequent cyclists who perhaps enjoy regular cycling at home and have a reasonable level of fitness.

Day 1. Arrive Delhi ; PM free

Our tour begins today, in the rich and vibrant city of Delhi. The Indian capital has long been a phoenix, rising again and again out of its own ruins and is essentially a city divided by centuries and cultures. The capital of a number of divergent empires it has grown over the intervening years to become a city swamped by the reminders of its divergent past, with a staggering 60,000 recognized monuments dotted around its streets and environs. Delhi's prominence has always stemmed from its position of dominance over the old trading routes from northern India down to the Gangetic Plains, resulting in its political and cultural importance over the centuries. An eclectic mix of bustling bazaars and historic sites it is the perfect place to begin our journey and this afternoon is free for you to perhaps explore a little of its exotic charms at your leisure.

Day 2. AM city tour; transfer to train station

PM for overnight sleeper to Udaipur This morning we enjoy a tour of Delhi's vibrant mix of the old and the new with a local guide, taking in the important sites of its Mughal and colonial past. Delhi passed into the hands of the British in 1857, following the First War of Indian Independence, initially becoming a district of the Punjab, until 1911 when it became the capital of the crowning jewel in Britain's expansive empire. New Delhi became the creation of the British Raj of the 1930's and our tour includes a look at the outside of the Lok Sabha (Parliament), India Gate, the Rajpath and Hamayun's Tomb. Whilst Old Delhi, the former capital of the 17th century emperor Shah Jahan, includes the great Mughal buildings of the Jami Masjid mosque and the Red Fort (outside only). The largest and probably best known of India's mosques, the Jama Masjid took some 14 years to build, occupying the talents of 5000 artisans and craftsmen. Occupying one of the two hills that stood overlooking the old city it was conceived to hold up to 25,000 worshippers and its original name of the Masjid-i-Jahanuma translated as 'The Mosque Commanding Views of the World'. The imposing presence of the Red Fort (Lal Quila) stands opposite. The largest of Old Delhi's magnificent architectural delights, its red sandstone walls bristle with turrets and towers, its fortified walls dominating the surrounding city, presenting us with a majestic testament to the power and grandeur of its Mughal creators.



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Our tour this morning will take in many of these historical landmarks and will also include a rickshaw ride through the main market area of Chandni Chowk. This afternoon has again been left free for you to enjoy more of Delhi's unique character, before we transfer to the train station for the overnight sleeper train to Udaipur. Overnight sleeper train

Day 3. Arrive Udaipur; optional orientation tour on foot and warm-up cycle Poetically christened the 'Venice of the East', Udaipur is a city dominated by the tranquil waters of Lake Pichola, setting for some of the most sumptuous architectural treasures in Rajasthan. We arrive in the city early this morning, disembarking the train and transferring to our hotel just a short bus ride away. Your time here has been left free to enjoy its majestic delights as you wish.

There is the opportunity this morning to take an optional orientation tour of the city with your tour leader, taking in the Ghats and the dhobi wallahs, the opulent edifice of the Jagdish Temple with its black stone image of Lord Vishnu, the spectacular views out across Lake Pichola to the towering magnificence of the City Palace and the Folk Art Museum. The city was founded by Maharana Udai Singh II in 1568, after the sacking of his citadel at Chittorgarh. He in turn was succeeded by Maharana Pratap, one of the most revered of the Rajput dynasty, whose defence of the city against the invading Mughals earned him a place in the city's folklore. An afternoon warm-up ride out into the nearby countryside will afford us the opportunity to get used to the bikes and make any last minute adjustments, riding out to the nearby craftsmen's village of Shilpgram and around the beautiful woodland nestling along the shores of Lake Fateh Sugar.

(Total cycling approx 15-35km)

Day 4. AM in Udaipur; drive to Kumbalgarh and visit fort & palace A free morning gives us another chance to see something more of this beautiful city before we depart, perhaps taking the option of a ride through the surrounding countryside to get us in the mood for the rides to come. After an early lunch we then depart by bus, heading north towards the fortress citadel at Kumbalgarh, dominating the wild lands of the Aravalli Hills. This imposing 15th century fort, one of the finest examples of defensive architecture in Rajasthan, fell only once during its lifetime and provided a safe haven for the rulers of Mewar during troubled times, as well as being the birthplace of the legendary Maharana Partap. Some 1100m above sea level its mighty walls (measuring some 36kms in length and wide enough to be able to take 8 horses riding abreast) protected an array of palaces and temples, even farms and the views across the surrounding landscape from its ramparts are quite spectacular. Arriving later this afternoon we visit the fort and its palace, enjoying the breathtaking vistas in the late afternoon sun. (Total cycling approx 25km)



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Day 5. AM cycle through wildlife sanctuary;

PM ride to Ranakpur This morning we negotiate the sandy tracks close to the fort and enter the nearby realms of the Kumbalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary. Dominated by the ever-present fortress, the sanctuary covers some 600 sq km and provides a haven to a large variety of wildlife, including rare wolves, leopards, hyena and the chalsingh (the 4 horned antelope). It also boasts an impressive collection of birdlife, with the normally elusive grey jungle fowl making a regular appearance, as well as red spur owls, golden oriole and white-breasted kingfishers. We will spend some time exploring this lovely setting, taking lunch in the sanctuary itself, before leaving the tracks behind and making good time towards Ranakpur along some more easily negotiated roads.

There should be an opportunity to relax and freshen up on arrival, before a late afternoon visit to the famous beautifully sculptured 15th century Jain Temples. Considered one of the 5 holy places of the

Jain religion, the temples are one of Rajasthan's gems. Situated in a wooded valley this little visited spot presents us with some of the most enchanting religious art anywhere in India, with carvings depicting scenes from the lives of the Jain Saints covering the walls and halls of the temples. The centrepiece is the temple of Chaumukha, dedicated to Adinath, a quite extraordinary structure that contains 29 halls and 1444 exquisitely carved pillars, with no two being alike.

Created during the reign of Rana Kumbha this remarkable building is complimented by the nearby presence of two more temples, dedicated to the Jain saints of Parasvanath and Neminath and filled with a unique collection of exquisite carved figures, creating an altogether entrancing feel of the divine. (Total cycling approx 35km).

Day 6. Cycle to Korta

Today we have a long day in the saddle, the journey between Ranakpur and Korta taking us across a terrain of verdant jungle that skirts the foothills of the Aravalli Range. Passing through local villages filled with colour and noise we traverse a scene of rural idyll as we head for the picturesque village of Korta, traditionally home to members of the Rabari sect. Legend has it that the men of the Rabari married the daughters of the gods, rather than mortal women, earning

them the epithet of Rabari (the goers out of the path). Once nomadic, they are by tradition camel herders, the men traveling vast distances with their herds in search of grazing land, whilst the women stay at home and run the villages. Worshippers of the goddess Mata Devi, they are a strong and proud people and their women wear distinctive black headscarves and heavy brass earrings. Later this afternoon there should be time to explore something of the village and its Jain temple before dinner. (Total cycling approx 78km).



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Day 7. Cycle to Bhenswara; PM optional jeep safari From Korta we continue through a pastoral landscape of villages and open fields, towards the small village of Bhenswara. We will cycle through some delightful, rural tribal villages well off the beaten track. The local population rarely see westerners and greet you with curious smiles. Situated in the foothills of the ever-present Aravallis, on the northern banks of the Jawai River, this is leopard country and this afternoon there is the option to take a jeep safari through the hilly terrain in search of these rare and elusive animals. (Total cycling approx 49km).

Day 8. Cycle to Bhadrajun

Today we head for the mythical castle of Bhadrajun. Our journey takes us through more idyllic countryside and untouched villages. Getting well off the beaten track again we will stop for lunch amongst the shade of babool and khejri trees at Begunda lake, before continuing to Bhadrajun. The castle occupies a commanding position above the village which looks out as far as the eye can see.

According to the Mahabarat, the Pandave prince Arjun eloped with Subhadra, the sister of lord Krishna and married in this valley. (Total cycling approx 49km).

Day 9. Drive and cycle to Jodhpur

This morning we drive and cycle to Jodhpur, Rajasthan's formidable desert city, standing on the edge of the Thar Desert and dominated by its immense Mehrangarh citadel. The second largest city in the province its ancient centre lies behind the protective defence of a 10 km long wall, originally protected by 8 gates, whilst the fortress's impregnable position on a steep escarpment some 125m above the plains commands some superb views across the surrounding landscape.

The city itself exudes a unique ambience, doubtless aided by not only its numerous magnificent buildings and temples but also its people who, in spite of the presence of such an imposing fortress, are believed to be amongst the most gentle and good natured of all India's colourful tribes. Founded in the mid 15th century by a Rajput chieftain by the name of Rao Jodha, the city occupied the strategic route between Delhi and Gujarat, controlling and profiting from a steady trade in opium, copper, coffee and dates. We will visit the fort, enjoying the spectacular views across the city and the distant desert plains and marvelling at the ornate splendour of its architecture. Originally started by Rao Jodha, much of the fort's surviving majesty dates from the reign of Jaswant Singh (1638-78) and its Rajput palace buildings within the fort complex are typically Mughal – very ornate, flamboyant, but also very practical and, as always, built with defence in mind. We will also visit the white marble magnificence of the Jaswant Thada, built at the end of the 19th century in memory of Maharaja Jaswant Singh II.



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Intricately carved from sheets of white marble, the cenotaph seems to glow in the dancing rays of the sun and amongst its splendid grounds are a beautifully carved gazebo, a layered garden and a small lake that is inhabited by alligators. (Total cycling approx 35 - 70km).

Day 10. Jodhpur / Jaipur (train)

Today we will make an early start and head to Jaipur by train (05.55 hrs/ 10.47 hrs). Sometimes called the Pink City, Jaipur was first painted terracotta pink by Maharajah Sawai Ram Singh to celebrate the visit of Prince Albert in 1853. On arrival, we'll take a sightseeing tour including a visit to the lavish and well preserved City Palace with its fine collection of textiles, costumes and armory.

Jai Singh, the great Maharajah-astronomer, built his extraordinary (and very accurate) star-gazing Observatory (Jantra) here and we will also have time to visit it this afternoon. The Old City has several fine gates set into the pink walls, and there are many chances for photos and shopping. (Cycling)

Day 11. Jaipur

Today we will visit the Palace of the Winds, a 5-storied facade (built about 1760) which has been the subject of countless Indian posters. Afterwards, we will drive to the Amber Fort. This impressive hilltop fortress possesses what must be the world's finest Chamber of Mirrors and affords glorious views of the surrounding.

PM Free. (Cycling)

Day 12. Jaipur / Agra

We start our journey east and come upon the deserted city of Fatehpur Sikri (5 hrs drive). Founded in 1569 and abandoned scarcely 16 years later, it is a perfectly intact example of Akbar's imperial court. Among the many noteworthy buildings is the 5-storied Panch Mahal, probably a pleasure pavilion for the ladies of the harem. In the centre of the courtyard is the Pachisi Board where the emperor played a game like chess with dancing slave girls as pieces. Perhaps the finest structure of all is the lotus shaped carved central pillar of the Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience), its extraordinary capital supporting a vaulted roof.

We continue our journey eastward to reach Agra (1 hr).

Day 13. Agra / Delhi

We visit the Taj Mahal, the world's most perfect and poetic building, at sunrise. Over 300 years have elapsed since its construction, yet it stands today unscarred by age, its beauty and symmetry seemingly beyond man, time and space. Created by Shah Jahan as a funerary monument to his favourite wife, Mumtaz, it took 22 years to build (1630-52). The Great Moghul lies beside his beloved under the white marble dome.



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Inlaid with precious gems, the building cost a fortune and later Shah Jahan moved his capital to Delhi before being overthrown by his son, Aurangzeb. We'll also visit the Agra Fort, built by Akbar the Great, which contains the incomparable Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque).

Afternoon we drive back to Delhi (4-5 hrs) and next day proceed to International Airport for your onward flight journey.

**14 daags individueel programma.
Kan perfect verlengd worden.**

Prijzen 2009

Aantal reizigers	2	3-4	5-6	7-9
Prijs per persoon €	1855	1755	1615	1580

Toeslag éénpersoonskamer: € 300

Inbegrepen: overnachtingen in kamer met ontbijt, alle middag en avondmalen, Engelstalige fietsgids, Nederlandstalige begeleider (enkel bij groepsreis), goede huurfiets met technische assistentie, volgwagen met airco, slaaptrein Delhi naar Udaipur 2^{de} klasse met airco, treinreis Jodhpur naar Jaipur in klasse met airco, alle inkomstgelden, hoteltaksen, BTW en garantiefonds.

Vluchten naar Delhi kunnen vanaf € 450 exclusief luchthaventaksen.