



# Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra



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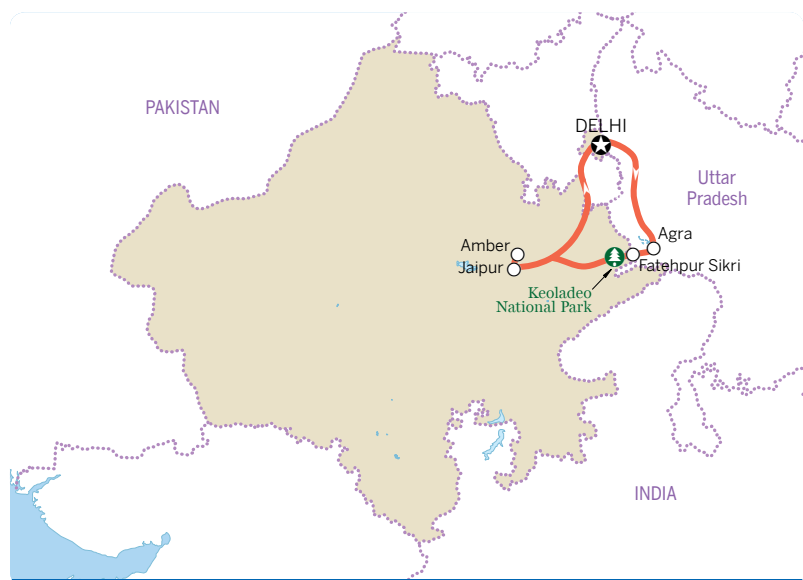
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# Itineraries



1  
WEEK

## The Golden Triangle

One route is so well loved it even has a name: the Golden Triangle. This classic Delhi–Agra–Jaipur trip can be squeezed into a single week and gives a tantalising taste of the splendours of Rajasthan.

Spend a day or two in **Delhi** finding your feet and seeing the big-draw sights, such as the magnificent Mughal Red Fort and Jama Masjid, India's largest mosque. Then catch a fast train to **Agra** to spend a day being awed by the Taj Mahal and the mighty Agra Fort. Only an hour away is **Fatehpur Sikri**, a beautiful Mughal city dating from the apogee of Mughal power. It can be visited on the way to Bharatpur, in Rajasthan, where you can enjoy a natural respite from the cities at **Keoladeo National Park**, one of the world's foremost bird reserves. Having relaxed and recharged with nature, you can now take a train to **Jaipur**. Spend a couple of days in and around Rajasthan's hectic, dusky-pink capital, seeing the City Palace and **Amber Fort** and stocking up on blue pottery, dazzling jewellery and Rajasthani puppets before heading back to Delhi.



2  
WEEKS

## Royal Rajasthan

With a fortnight to spare, you can forget triangles and go all out for a multifaceted loop taking in Rajasthan's most spectacular cities, all erstwhile capitals of former princely states, boasting fairy-tale palaces and formidable fortresses.

You will most likely start from the nation's capital of **Delhi** to see the Mughal monuments, such as the massive Red Fort. No trip to India is complete without a visit to the Taj Mahal at **Agra**. Spend two days here viewing the Taj during the day, at night and from the maze-like Agra Fort. Spend a day exploring the ghost city of **Fatehpur Sikri**, before heading to **Keoladeo National Park** for birdwatching. Next stop is the pink city of **Jaipur**, where you will want to spend two or three days exploring the palaces of Jaipur and Amber and the shopping bazaars of the Old City.

From Jaipur, head to the sacred lake of **Pushkar**, where you can release your inner hippie or attend the camel fair. Move on to the romantic lake-town of **Udaipur**, visiting the rambling City Palace and the impressive Jagdish Temple as well as doing some shopping, relaxing on rooftops, and peering at the lake and its famous floating palace. From Udaipur, head towards the extraordinary, bustling, blue city of Jodhpur. Take time to stop at the milk-white Jain temple complex of **Ranakpur** and the isolated, dramatic fortifications of **Kumbhalgarh** – as they are fairly close together, you can visit them en route to Jodhpur within a day. In **Jodhpur**, visit the spectacular Mehrangarh, a fort that towers protectively over the city like a storybook fortress.

Next take an overnight train to the Golden City, **Jaisalmer**, a giant sandcastle in the desert, with its beautiful Jain temples and exquisite merchants' *havelis* (traditional, ornately decorated mansions). Take a short camel safari through the bewitching landscape of sweeping dunes and sleep under the stars. If you have the time on your way back to Delhi, break your journey with a stop in the desert city of **Bikaner**, home of the impregnable Junagarh Fort and nearest city to the famous rat temple of **Deshnok**. From Bikaner catch one of several trains back to Delhi.



4  
WEEKS

## A Month-Long Sojourn

A month will allow you to explore Delhi, Agra and Rajasthan to their fullest extent, with plenty of time to linger along the way whenever a particular destination takes your fancy.

After arriving in **Delhi** and exploring the city sights, take the train down to **Agra** to gaze at the picture-perfect Taj Mahal, explore Agra Fort and have a day trip out to the abandoned Mughal city of **Fatehpur Sikri**. To experience Rajasthan's wild side, head to the World Heritage-listed birdwatching paradise of **Keoladeo National Park**, where the sheer numbers of nesting birdlife will astound you. This can be followed by a tiger safari at **Ranthambhore National Park**, one of your best bets in all India for spotting a tiger.

Take a Kota-bound train southwest for a stop at the charming settlement of **Bundi** to explore the crumbling palace and its magical art. From here it is a short train ride to **Chittorgarh** where one of Rajasthan's most impressive fortresses occupies a mountain plateau. Next stop is **Udaipur**, where you can relax after your travels with a few easy days of sightseeing, elegant dining and souvenir shopping.

From Udaipur it's worth side-tripping to **Mt Abu** to see the extraordinary Delwara Temples before going north to Jodhpur. Alternatively, head north to Jodhpur, stopping on the way to see the magnificent fort at **Kumbhalgarh** and the Jain temples of **Ranakpur**. From **Jodhpur** it's an easy train or bus ride to **Jaisalmer**, the desert town with a romantic, picturesque fort rising from the golden sands. Here you can spend a few days exploring *havelis* and temples, before taking an overnight camel trek into the desert. After Jaisalmer, head east across the desert to **Bikaner**.

Travel south from Bikaner, stopping at the fascinating rat temple of **Deshnok** before coming to rest at the sacred pilgrimage town of **Pushkar**. At Pushkar you may be in time for the famous camel festival; otherwise, just put your feet up for a few days and soak up the serenity.

From Pushkar, it's a short hop to **Jaipur**, with its fabulous citadel at Amber and great shopping. Head north to **Shekhawati** for a few days, inspecting *havelis* at **Mandawa**, **Nawalgarh** and **Fatehpur**, before returning to Delhi.

3  
WEEKS

## Sacred Rajasthan

Temples abound in Rajasthan. These include Hindu and Jain edifices, plus mosques, gurdwaras and a scattering of churches. Here are some of the more noteworthy.

Starting in **Jaipur**, there's the popular Ganesh Temple that sees scores of worshippers every Wednesday. Other temples in Jaipur include the Govind Devji (Krishna) Temple inside the city palace, and Galta the 'monkey temple', swarming with monkeys.

**Ajmer** boasts one of the most important Sufi shrines in the world, the Dargah of Khwaja Muin-ud-din Chishti, and the fascinating Soniji Ki Nasiyan (Red) Temple; its unremarkable exterior hides a fantastical golden diorama depicting the Jain concept of the ancient world. **Pushkar** has one of the very few temples devoted to Brahma.

At **Udaipur**, the Hindu Jagdish Temple is always a riot of colour and fervent worshipping, while up at **Mt Abu**, the intricately carved Delwara Temples are Jain masterpieces. The Chaumukha Mandir in **Ranakpur** and Mahavira Temple in **Osian** can be visited on the way to **Jaisalmer**, whose fort shelters several finely carved Jain temples. Last on the list is Karni Mata, the rat temple of **Deshnok**, south of Bikaner.

4  
DAYS

## Painted Shekhawati

The fabulous frescoes of Shekhawati can be scouted out in three or four days by moving between three or four of the region's towns. A bonus is the chance to stay in restored *havelis* once inhabited by prosperous traders, and to explore the backstreets on foot.

**Nawalgarh** is only a couple of hours' drive from Jaipur and offers accommodation ranging from thatch-roofed rural huts to grand and luxurious *havelis*. There's even a palace. Base yourself here to visit restored *havelis* and museums; don't forget to wander around and discover the fading gems on lesser-known, crumbling *havelis*.

From Nawalgarh head north to **Mandawa**. Mandawa can lay claim to the most accommodation options suited for travellers, including a grand castle, and it also has several *havelis* worth a look for their whimsical murals of 18th-century life.

West of Mandawa, is the dusty hamlet of **Fatehpur**, a town now famed for its restored Le Prince Haveli, where French artist Nadine Le Prince rejuvenated the frescoes and hosted visiting artists. It is now an inviting boutique hotel amid a town of deteriorating yet tantalising treasures.

## Off the Beaten Track - Rajasthan

**DESHNOK**

The Karni Mata Temple (aka the Rat Temple) at Deshnok, 30km south of Bikaner, is not for the squeamish. The place is crawling with rodents ... and you have to remove your shoes to enter! (p146)

**ALWAR**

Busy Alwar doesn't see a lot of tourist traffic, despite its proximity to Sariska. Take the time to visit one of Rajasthan's more interesting museums. (p66)

**DEEG**

The extraordinary buildings and gardens that comprise Suraj Mahal's Palace are an insight into privilege and an easy detour between Bharatpur and Alwar. (p68)

**OSIAN**

The desert town of Osian, between Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, sees far fewer visitors than those tourist hotspots. Camel safaris to villages and dune campsites are authentic and stress-free. (p126)

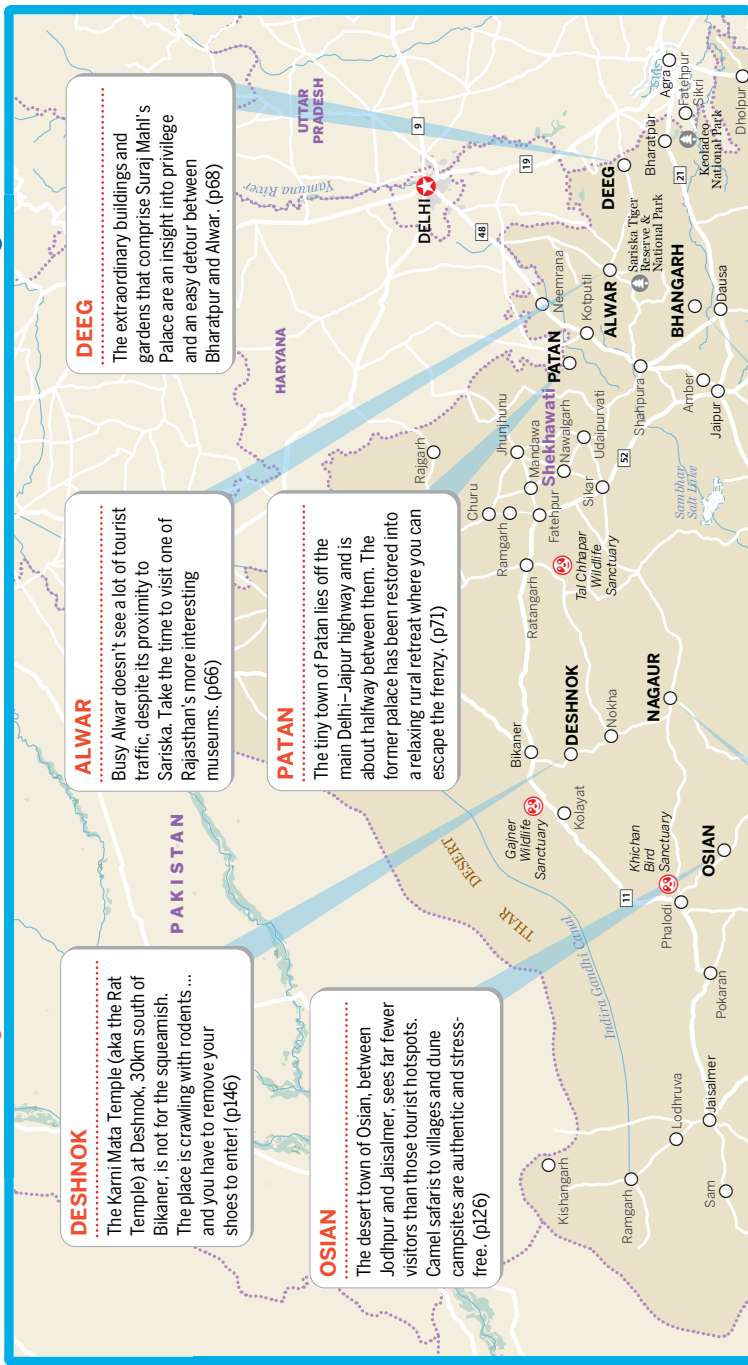
**PATAN**

The tiny town of Patan lies off the main Delhi-Jaipur highway and is about halfway between them. The former palace has been restored into a relaxing rural retreat where you can escape the frenzy. (p71)

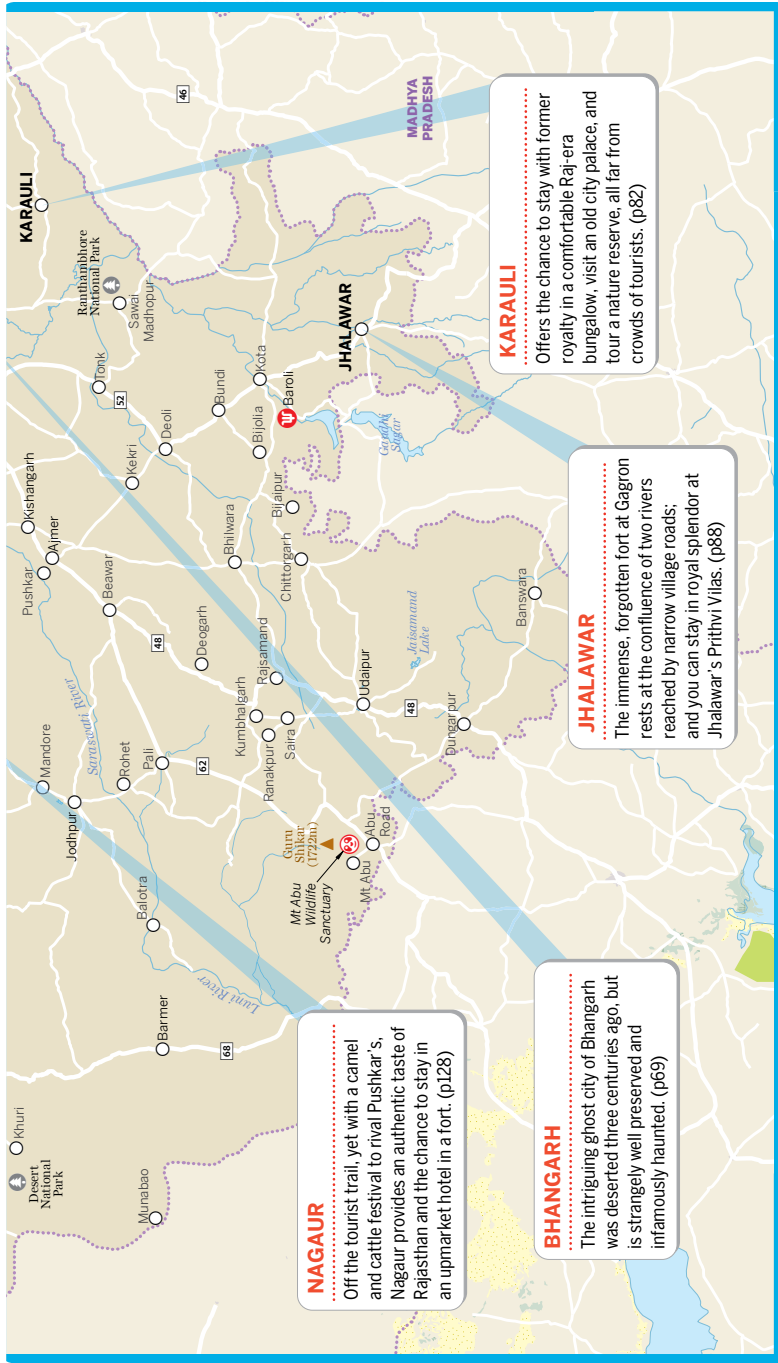
## PAKISTAN

## HARYANA

## UTTAR PRADESH







### NAGAU

Off the tourist trail, yet with a camel and cattle festival to rival Pushkar's, Nagaur provides an authentic taste of Rajasthan and the chance to stay in an upmarket hotel in a fort. (p128)

### BHANGARH

The intriguing ghost city of Bhangarh was deserted three centuries ago, but is strangely well preserved and infamously haunted. (p69)

### JHALAWAR

The immense, forgotten fort at Gagraon rests at the confluence of two rivers and you can stay in royal splendor at Jhalawar's Prithvi Vilas. (p88)

### KARAULI

Offers the chance to stay with former royalty in a comfortable Raj-era bungalow, visit an old city palace, and tour a nature reserve, all far from crowds of tourists. (p82)

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## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

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Joe first got the travel bug on a grand tour of Asia in the early 1990s, and he's been roaming around its temples and paddy fields ever since on dozens of assignments for Lonely Planet and other publishers, covering everywhere from Myanmar and Thailand to India and Nepal. Joe was Lonely Planet's destination editor for the Indian subcontinent until 2019. See more of his work at [www.bindloss.co.uk](http://www.bindloss.co.uk).



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