

# rajasthan tiger challenge, india



**Your expedition begins in the hustle and bustle of Delhi. Take some time to get behind the chaotic facade and discover the inner peace of a city rich with culture, architecture and human diversity.**

**Then move on to Agra, home of the Taj Mahal where you can explore the monument before your biking challenge begins.**

**Your bike will take you to more remote locations than most other modes of transport, bringing you in direct contact with the country and its people.**

**Once in Rajasthan the region offers dramatic desert landscape, fantastic wildlife, exquisite forts, bustling cities and rural life that seems frozen in time.**

**You will be one of the first few mountain bikers to explore this idyllic region, punctuated with villages reminiscent of a time gone by. Traditional rural lifestyles remain preserved and a friendly smile leaves a lasting memory.**

**Your ride ends in Rajasthan's capital city, Jaipur, whose welcoming air provides an idyllic end to this fascinating challenge.**

## **Day 1: London to Delhi**

Your flight will depart from London to Delhi. Our Charity Challenge representative will be there to assist you with the check-in and any last minute questions.

## **Day 2: Delhi**

This morning you will arrive into Delhi International Airport. You will be met at the airport by your Charity Challenge tour leader and transferred to your hotel to freshen up. You will have a chance to look around India's bustling capital, with its labyrinth of streets and

markets, crowded with exotic produce and a bewildering mix of people. You can 'shop 'til you drop' or take in Delhi's sights. You can visit the Red Fort; when Delhi became capital of the Moghul Empire in the early 1600's the Red Fort became the base of Emperor's kingdom, Jama Masjid; the largest mosque in India and Raj Ghat, the memorial place to Gandhi. Overnight in a hotel in Delhi.

## **Day 3: Taj Mahal**

You will transfer by Shatabdi express train (approx 2hrs) to Agra, home of the Taj Mahal, having breakfast en route. You will visit one of the most awesome and extravagant monuments ever built - the Taj Mahal. It was constructed by Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife in 1631-1653 with thousands of semi-precious stones inlaid. You will have time to explore this celebrated edifice. You will now be at the start of your challenge to prepare your bikes for the cycle ahead and meet your support team. Overnight hotel in Agra.



## **Day 4: Taj Mahal to Fatephur Sikri - 50km approx / 4-5hrs**

Now the challenge begins; a mountain biker's dream! The terrain you will ride on consists of small roads, some of which are dirt tracks but mainly tarmac covered roads. This won't be a luxury though as Indian roads are rough and full of potholes! You start your cycle from the Taj

Mahal and head towards Fatephur Sikri. This magnificent fortified ghost city was the capital of the Mughal Empire between 1571-1585, during the reign of Emperor Akbar. Fatephur Sikri was once abandoned, but thanks to the durable red sandstone and a lot of work by the Archaeological Survey of India it remains a perfectly preserved example of a Mughal city at the height of the empire's splendour. Although a deserted, phantom city, the heart of the palace complex is very much alive. At the tomb of Sheikh Salim Chishti, pilgrims still come in thousands to offer flowers, tie a thread in the latticed screens and to pray for the gift of a son. Overnight in hotel.



#### **Day 5: Fatephur Sikri to Keoladeo Ghana National Park – 40km approx / 4-5hrs**

Keoladeo National Park is your next destination. Declared a National Park in 1983, this 29sq km park is a World Heritage site. The park was first established by the local Maharaja, not for conservation reasons, but for hunting. It is recorded that in 1 day alone, 5000 birds were shot. All of this has since changed to preserve such a wide variety of species of bird in a beautiful sanctuary where the only vehicle allowed is a bicycle! Keoladeo is one of the world's greatest heronries. Its shallow, fresh water marsh attracts thousands of migratory birds. Over 10,000 nests & 400 varieties of birds including: egrets, darters, cormorants, grey herons, spoonbills, cranes, ibis, kingfishers and painted storks can be seen. Mammals like the sambhar, blackbuck, chital, nilgai, fishing cat, otter and mongoose also roam freely here. One of the most breathtaking sights, however, is that of the peacock dancing. The National Bird of India, this graceful bird can be found all over the state and if you are lucky, you may see one! Overnight in hotel.

#### **Day 6: Keoladeo Ghana National Park to Karauli – 120km approx / 7-8hrs**

Continuing on through the National Park with the help of our accompanying escort, you will interact with the locals and gain greater insight into their lives. This diverse state is the home of the Rajputs, a group of warrior clans and tribes who have controlled this part of India for thousands of years according to a code of chivalry and honour akin to that of the medieval European knights. The Rajputs are a very chivalrous and martial race. Their rule here has left them a legacy of magnificent forts, palaces and mansions. The traditional bright and colourful dresses of the locals, their primitive means of

agriculture, traditional homes and lifestyles, camel carts and donkey carts, traditional occupations such as clay pottery & hand printing of fabrics, provide a firsthand experience of a living museum. Overnight in Maharaja's Palace.

#### **Day 7: Karauli to Ranthambore National Park – 105km approx / 7 –8 hrs**

Today you will cycle to Ranthambore National Park, one of the prime examples of Project Tiger's conservation efforts in Rajasthan & a favourite haunt of wildlife buffs & professional wildlife photographers from around the world. The park is famous for its tigers, one of the most magnificent animals of India, which has long fascinated people with its awesome power and beautifully striped coat. There are also many other species to see including sambar, cheetah, wild boar, leopard, sloth bear, jackal and hyena among others. The park itself covers 1334sq km and its scenery is beautiful. A system of lakes and rivers is hemmed in by steep, high crags and on top of one of these is the Ranthambore Fort, built in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Another interesting feature of the park is a huge banyan tree, supposedly one of the world's largest, near the graceful Jogi Mahal water palace. The lower ground alternates between open bush land and fairly dense forest and is dotted with old ruins, pavilions and 'hides' – the area was formerly a hunting preserve of the Maharajas. Nestling between the Aravali and Vindhya hills, Ranthambore remains one of Rajasthan's last sizeable stretches of verdant grassland and jungle. Its forests were once part of the jungles of central India and are of the tropical dry deciduous type, with Dhok being the most prominent tree. Ranthambore is fed by several perennial rivers and contains a number of permanent lakes complete with resident crocodiles. Overnight in luxury tented camp & guesthouse.

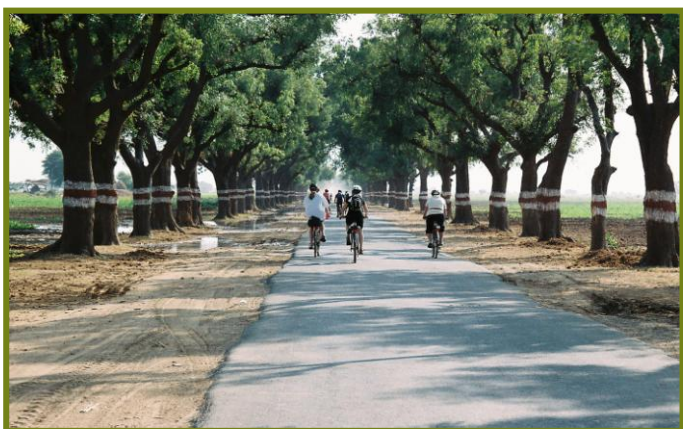


#### **Day 8: Ranthambore National Park to Bhanderej – 70km approx / 5-6hrs**

An early start for your sunrise safari into Ranthambore Park. You have the opportunity to pass through Hindu settlements, temples and shepherd encampments. You will be passing through a variety of terrain and staying in ancient forts or palace of the Maharaja's. While crossing the area it is also valuable to note the many pilgrims, traders and armies who have followed these trails for generations and whose journeys reflect the rich cultural history of the region. Overnight in Maharaja's Palace.

### Day 9: Bhanderej to Jaipur – 80km / 5-6hrs

As you cycle closer to Jaipur you have the opportunity to catch last glimpses of the villages & the people as they wave goodbye and give you wonderful final memories. You head towards the end of your challenge and enter the colourful city of Jaipur, the vibrant capital of Rajasthan and popularly known as the 'Pink City'; the colour associated with hospitality. Jaipur is surrounded by barren hills surmounted by forts. This buzzing metropolis is certainly a place of wild contrasts and a feast for the eyes. Vegetable laden camel carts thread their way through the streets jam-packed with rickshaws, bicycles, tempos, motorcycles and pedestrians dodging the crazy traffic. Traditionally dressed Rajput men sporting bright turbans and swash-buckling moustaches discuss village politics outside restaurants and roadside stalls. After a rest we will start exploring this fascinating city. For things to see and do, you need at least a lifetime in Jaipur. The city owes its name, its foundation and its careful planning to the great warrior-astronomer, Maharaja Jai Singh II (1693-1743). In 1727, Jai Singh decided that the time was ripe to move down from his hillside Amber Fort to a new site on the plains. In 1728, he built the remarkable observatory, Jantar Mantar, which is still one of Jaipur's main attractions. Another site is the Hawa Mahal, or Palace of the Winds, constructed in 1799. You can climb to the top of the Hawa Mahal for a fine view over the city. In the heart of the old city, is the City Palace, an incredibly well preserved and interesting palace to view with museums and artefacts. Jaipur is the place to shop until you drop, you cannot beat its variety. There are many handicrafts ranging from papier-mâché puppets to exquisitely carved furniture. Jaipur is well known for precious and semi-precious gems, marble statues, costume jewellery and textile prints are other specialities. You can shop in the Johri Bazaar selling local handicrafts, jewellery and sweets. There is a timeless appeal to Jaipur's colourful bazaars. You will have some time in Jaipur to explore the city or shop. We will then celebrate the completion of our challenge and amazing ride through India, with a Rajasthani Party, with traditional banquet, folk music and dancing at the Maharajas Old Palace.



### Day 10: Delhi to London

Early morning transfer to Delhi Airport for the check in for return flight to London. Arrive the same day in the UK.

N.B. the itinerary is there as a guide and may change due to weather patters, wildlife movement, the strength of the movement and so on. Indian travel can also throw up limitations of its own! We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary however we can not be held responsible for any last minute changes that might occur. In all such circumstances, your expedition leader will have the final say.