

INDIA

TEXTILES AND HANDCRAFTS

9 - 27 October 2026

retreat|recreate is delighted to offer this 19 day/18 night small group, women's tour exploring **Delhi, Agra and Rajasthan** through the lens of traditional textiles and handcrafts.

Visit specialist textile museums, artisan villages and ateliers, colourful bazaars and fabulous tourist sites; **engage** with local artisans; **be inspired** by incredible design, craftsmanship, architecture and landscapes; and **experience** wonderful Indian culture, cuisine and hospitality.

Participate in SEVEN hands-on handcraft workshops:

Zari Zardozi metallic thread embroidery; wood block printing; bandhani (tie & dye); miniature painting; thread embellishment with a women's community enterprise; embroidery with the women of the Kalbelia (snake charmer) community; and patchwork and applique with the women from a social enterprise which supports wildlife tourism.

A nation of contrasts, India is at once raw and exotic, distinctly earthy and riotously colourful, delicate and brutal, alluring and confronting, decadent and survivalist.

Join us for this exciting trip of a lifetime and allow **incredible India** to move, inspire and leave you in awe!

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ITINERARY

as at JULY 2026



Day 1	Friday 9 October	Day 2	Saturday 10 October
DELHI	Maidens Hotel	DELHI	Maidens Hotel
Namaste! Welcome to India! Upon arrival at Delhi International airport, you'll be met and transferred to our charming, 4 star (according to Trip Advisor), heritage starting point hotel. We encourage you to arrive in Delhi at least a day or two before the tour to recover from flights between time zones and explore independently. Participants have the option to choose from several half and full day pre-trip sightseeing tours (available at an additional cost). Suggestions for pre and post tour sightseeing and textile shopping will be provided to participants closer to departure. Additional nights at our starting point hotel may be booked through us (at extra cost and subject to availability). For our first evening together, we'll gather at 6pm (TBC) at our Delhi hotel for a 'welcome' meeting where you'll be introduced to your fellow travellers, retreat recreate host and local tour leader. Afterwards, we'll head out to one of Delhi's fantastic restaurants for our first group dinner.		To kickstart our exciting Indian adventure, we'll embark on a fascinating day of cultural sightseeing including visits to: the very impressive Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, a Sikh place of worship with huge kitchens run by volunteers and a dining hall where up to 1500 people per day are provided with a free meal; fabulous Agrasen Ki Baori stepwell, a subterranean stepped structure for collecting, storing and accessing water, believed to have been commissioned by King Agrasen around 3000BC; and Jama Masjid, one of India's largest mosques with a courtyard capable of holding 25,000 devotees. The mosque was built from red sandstone and marble during the reign of Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan (who also commissioned the construction of the very famous Taj Mahal, Agra). Boarding rickshaws, we'll weave our way through the bustling labyrinth of narrow lanes which constitute Chandni Chowk, one of Delhi's oldest and busiest markets. We'll pass flower sellers, fabric and trim merchants, spice traders and many other stalls. We'll return to our hotel for the evening.	
Meals: Dinner		Meals: Breakfast	



Day 3	Sunday 11 October	Day 4	Monday 12 October	Day 5	Tuesday 13 October	Day 6	Wednesday 14 October	Day 7	Thursday 15 October
AGRA	Grand Imperial	AGRA	Grand Imperial	JAIPUR	Mandawa Haveli	JAIPUR	Mandawa Haveli	JAIPUR	Mandawa Haveli
This morning we'll visit the National Crafts Museum for an overview of the huge variety of traditional textiles and crafts from across India. You're sure to be delighted and impressed by the many types of intricate embroidery, the range of weaving methods and materials, dyeing, resist techniques, printing, fabric painting, ceramics, wood carving and much, much more! In the early afternoon, we'll depart for Agra in our private coach (approximately a 4 hour drive). Our coach will accompany us until day 19 when we board our train from Ranthambore back to Delhi. Upon arrival in Agra, we'll settle into our heritage hotel for the next two nights. Tomorrow evening (day 4), there's the option to watch the Mohabbat-e-Taj Cultural show (at additional cost). The show follows the story of Emperor Shah Jahan, his wife Mumtaz and the Taj Mahal, bringing it to life through theatre, music and dance.		Rising early, we'll visit the iconic and extremely beautiful Taj Mahal. The famous monument to love with its incredible, luminous marble construction and inlay work was built in memory of Emperor Shah Jahan's favourite wife, Mumtaz. Afterwards, we'll return to our hotel for breakfast and relaxation. Zardozi embroidery work involves making elaborate designs using gold and silver threads along with precious stones. Zardozi comes from two Persian words: zar, meaning 'gold', and dozi, meaning 'work'. This type of embroidery was traditionally used to adorn the walls of the royal tents, scabbards and wall hangings as well as the paraphernalia of royal elephants and horses. During our afternoon Zari Zardozi workshop, we'll learn to work with metallic thread and make simple embroidery designs. In the late afternoon, we'll enjoy a demonstration of intricate marble inlay work. Inlay of marble or semi-precious stones is known as Pachchikar. It has become a craft for which Agra is renowned and is famous for adorning Mughal architecture.		As we leave Agra behind, we'll head to the capital of Rajasthan (approximately a 5 hour drive). On the way we'll stop at Chand-baori, one of India's deepest and finest stepwells. In earlier times, women would gather daily at their local stepwell to collect water, socialise and even arrange the occasional wedding. Adjacent to the stepwell is a 10th century temple dedicated to Harshat Mata, the goddess of joy and happiness. The 'pink city' of Jaipur is a friendly, busy town crammed with palaces, temples, historic buildings and bazaars full of textiles, jewellery and folk-based arts. In the late afternoon, we'll check into our hotel for the next four nights. The rest of the day is free for you to relax, explore independently or enjoy our optional Bollywood dance class (at additional cost).		This morning's walking and e-rickshaw tour is our favourite way to explore some of Jaipur's artisan communities, lanes, temples and markets – it's a great introduction to the rich cultural heritage of this vibrant city. While Jaipur's royal family continue to reside at the opulent City Palace, many areas are open to the public. This afternoon we'll visit some of the palace's stunning reception halls, courtyards and its acclaimed museum where lavish royal costumes, textiles and art are displayed. We'll make a photo stop at the stunning Hawa Mahal, which translates as 'palace of the wind'. From the five-storey façade and 953 sandstone lattice screened windows (jharokas), the royal women, who once strictly observed purdah, were able to view activities in the street without being seen by the public. This evening there's the option to have dinner (at additional cost) at the beautiful, blue Bar Palladio (subject to availability and group's interest) https://www.bar-palladio.com		Leaving the city this morning, we'll head to a village which has been home to the Chhipa (print/dye) clan for at least 400 years. We'll take a walk through the village to see the stages of the hand block printing process and observe artisans using both mud-resist (dabu) and ink printing techniques. You'll be amazed at the skill of the wood carvers as they work on the intricate wood block patterns. Under the supervision of master artisans, we'll each be able to dip a piece of pre-prepared, mud-resist printed fabric into the deep indigo vats and also try our hand at block printing with ink. Our printed and dyed fabric pieces can be taken home as souvenirs of this very special handcraft village. Upon returning to Jaipur, the rest of the day is free for you to rest, relax or explore independently.	
Meals: Breakfast		Meals: Breakfast		Meals: Breakfast, Lunch		Meals: Breakfast		Meals: Breakfast	



Day 8 Friday 16 October



Day 9 Saturday 17 October



Day 10 Sunday 18 October



Day 11 Monday 19 October



Day 12 Tuesday 20 October

JAIPUR Mandawa Haveli

India is the birthplace of yoga. This morning there's the option to take an early yoga class (at additional cost).

After breakfast, we'll head to a **carpet weaving village** where we'll meet a community of skilled women artisans. We'll watch as raw wool is woven on huge handlooms, knot by knot to make superb heirloom carpets. There'll be an **opportunity to briefly sit by an artisan and learn to make the knots**, at the same time gaining an appreciation for the lengthy process required in the creation of each rug.

The ancient capital of **Amer** (Amber) boasts an impressive **fort** filled with elaborate rooms of lavish murals, frescoed arches and delicate jali work (carved stone lattice). This afternoon, we'll travel in our private coach to Amer before a short jeep ride along the narrow cobbled streets to the fort.

To deepen our knowledge of the art of block printing, we'll stop at the superb **Anokhi museum**, set in a stunning 400-year-old haveli. **Wood-block printing** at its finest is showcased here, along with detailed displays of traditional and contemporary block print designs.

Meals: Breakfast

JODHPUR Manak Haveli

Leaving Jaipur, we'll drive onward to Rajasthan's second largest city (approximately 6 hours) making stops for photos, meals and bathroom breaks.

Established in the 15th century on the edge of the Great Thar Desert, **Jodhpur** was an important trading centre. Historically many of the city's buildings were painted blue to signify the home of a high caste Brahmin. Today much of the city has been painted blue as other castes followed suit.

Upon arrival, we'll check in to our delightful accommodation for the next four nights.

Meals: Breakfast

JODHPUR Manak Haveli

We are privileged to visit **Sambhali Trust**, a wonderful organisation which works to **empower disadvantaged women, girls, widows and marginalised genders**.

Education, skills development, vocational training, livelihood opportunities and basic health support are just some of the services provided to assist individuals and families rebuild their lives and regain stability, dignity and independence.

We'll meet some of the girls and women and view their impressive embroidery samplers and current handcraft projects. There's also the opportunity for each of us to **collaborate with the women in a small block-print and embroidery project** to take home.

We're also invited to **join the women in preparing, cooking and eating a delicious lunch**. We'll gain an insight into the use of the basic spices and ingredients used in homestyle cooking.

In the late afternoon, we'll take a **heritage walking tour** of the famous 'blue city' before returning to our hotel for the evening

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

JODHPUR Manak Haveli

Today we'll visit a talented **bandhani (tie and dye) artisan** to learn about the detailed techniques and process of knotting, tying, dyeing, boiling, bleaching and washing fabric to create intricate and varied designs.

We'll enjoy a **hands-on bandhani workshop**, practice some tie and dye techniques and each tie dye a silk handkerchief to take home.

There'll be some free time this afternoon for resting, relaxing, shopping or independent exploration at your own pace.

Meals: Breakfast

JODHPUR Manak Haveli

The colossal **Mehrangarh Fort** sits atop a sheer rocky ridge in the middle of Jodhpur. We'll explore the looming fortress and the series of palaces within. All were chiselled from the hard sandstone by many skilled sculptors. The **museum** located within the fort is known for its exceptional collection of palanquins (enclosed litter, carried by servants), howdahs (decorated seats for riding camels and elephants) and other interesting artefacts.

This afternoon we will travel by jeep into Jodhpur's surrounding countryside, to learn more about the various caste **villages and their traditional textiles and handcrafts**. These villages are home to people such as the Bishnois, known for their conservationist spiritual beliefs, principles of non-violence and reverent protection of all plants, animals and nature.

We'll visit skilled **potters**, highly acclaimed **master weavers of beautiful wool and cotton dhurries**, experience a **traditional ceremony** and catch a glimpse into rural Rajasthani life. We're privileged to enjoy **dinner with a local family** - a unique experience to round off our time in this region.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 13 Wednesday 21 October

Day 14 Thursday 22 October

Day 15 Friday 23 October

Day 16 Saturday 24 October

Day 17 Sunday 25 October

UDAIPUR

Udai Kothi

Leaving Jodhpur, we'll travel (2 hours) to the beautiful hamlet of **Ranakpur** - home to a number of intricately carved white marble **Jain temples**. These astounding, complex temples attract Jain pilgrims from all over India, making Ranakpur one of the nation's most important Jain pilgrim destinations.

After lunch at a nearby resort, we'll continue on our journey to beautiful Udaipur (approximately 3 hours) where we'll check into our hotel for the next three nights.

Known as the 'Venice of the east', **Udaipur** is built around the shores of Lake Pichola. Full of fascinating temples, ornate palaces and impressive havelis, the city is home to a bounty of arts and crafts and several bustling and colourful bazaars.

UDAIPUR

Udai Kothi

This morning there'll be some free time to enjoy a relaxed breakfast, explore independently or perhaps visit the local market.

We'll visit the very **beautiful museum, located in the city's 450 year old royal palace**. The ornate rooms are filled with priceless artwork and regal memorabilia.

Afterwards, we'll visit an **art centre, gallery and workshop**. We'll learn about the process of making **natural inks** and the techniques involved in miniature painting – an art for which Udaipur is famous. Originally painted on cloth or manuscripts made from dried palm leaves, these small-scale, highly detailed paintings can be traced back to at least the 9th century.

Guided by prominent artisans, we'll participate in a **miniature painting workshop** and each create our own miniature 'masterpiece'.

UDAIPUR

Udai Kothi

We'll take a short drive out of town to a village where we'll enjoy a **guided village walk**. We'll also visit **Sadhna**, a **social enterprise** that works with over 600 women from low socio-economic neighbourhoods of Udaipur.

The women receive vocational training in **patchwork, applique, block printing, and Kashmiri tanka embroidery** and produce handmade textiles for a boutique clothing label. The training provides the women with economic empowerment, self-confidence and the option to work from home while they care for their children. We'll have the opportunity to learn some of the often-used techniques as we join some of the women for a **stitching and thread embellishment workshop**.

To fully experience Udaipur's lakeside setting, we'll take a **late afternoon boat ride** on the placid waters of Lake Pichola. As the sun sets over Udaipur's striking skyline, we'll learn more about the city's history, culture and people.

KOTA

Umed Bhawan

Today, we'll leave Udaipur after breakfast and head towards Kota (approximately 4.5 hours).

We'll stop on the way to visit a village which is home to the **Kota Doria weaving** community.

Kota Doria is a supremely sheer, open-textured, lightweight fabric. Handwoven with a combination of **silk and cotton** – the cotton providing strength and the silk providing sheen. Kota Doria cloth is characterised by its square check pattern known as 'khat'. This beautiful, airy fabric is highly sought after for wedding saris and fetches premium prices.

We'll learn about the process for creating superb Kota Doria cloth and observe the highly skilled weavers at work.

Afterwards, we'll continue driving to nearby Kota where we'll check into our heritage accommodation for the evening.

RANTHAMBORE

Shergarh

Travelling onward this morning, we'll drive to Ranthambore (3 hours). En route, we'll visit a Kalbeliya (snake charmer) community. Here the women are engaged in producing **stunning quilts, cushion covers** and other products distinguished by their **particular style of embroidery, applique and quilting**.

Traditionally, Kalbeliya women made quilts for their own collection and as trousseau gifts for their daughters. The quilts were passed down through the generations and never sold. The quality of the quilts reflects the richness, skill and talent of the women of the house.

Particularly since the pandemic, several craft revival projects have been working to provide the Kalbeliya community with opportunities for a better livelihood. We're fortunate to be able to participate in a **hands-on quilting, applique and embroidery workshop with the Kalbeliya women**.

In the late afternoon we'll check into our resort where we'll stay for the final two nights of our journey together.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Meals: Breakfast

Meals: Breakfast

Meals: Breakfast

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 18 Monday 26 October

RANTHAMBORE Shergarh

We'll visit a wonderful **community initiative** that provides training, support and empowerment to local women along with an opportunity to earn a sustainable, ethical living from handcrafts. The program also aims to keep traditional handcraft practices alive and protect the tigers which are Ranthambore's main tourist attraction. We'll learn about **Rajasthani-style patchwork, appliqué and embroidery and join the women for a hands-on workshop as we learn a few of their favourite techniques.**

In the afternoon, we'll head to **Ranthambore National Park** for a **wildlife safari**. The sanctuary is home to numerous mammals, birds and reptiles including many endangered species. With a bit of luck, we may spot crocodiles, a variety of bird species, deer and perhaps one of the resident Royal Bengal tigers for which the park is famous!

Tonight is officially the last evening of our tour and our final one as a group. We'll gather for a **farewell dinner**, reflect on the memories and highlights of our journey together and take stock of our photos and textile mementos from this incredible part of the world.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 19 Tuesday 27 October

RANTHAMBORE - DELHI

This morning we'll return to Delhi by train (air-con, chair carriage) (about 5 hours).

Our tour ends upon arrival at Delhi Nizamuddin Railway Station. Our scheduled arrival time in Delhi will be confirmed closer to departure.

You may wish to stay on in Delhi and explore this amazing city or other regions of India independently. Additional nights at our Delhi hotel may be booked through us at an additional cost (subject to availability).

Alternatively, if you choose to catch an onward/homeward flight from Delhi airport today, your flight should not depart before 22:00 hours to allow for possible train and traffic delays and adequate time to check in for your onward flight. Our local guide can assist you to arrange your transfer from the railway station to the airport (you pay the transfer driver).

Meals: Breakfast

THINGS TO NOTE

- It's vital that you read the **Health, Mobility and Fitness section of the Trip Notes** to determine if this tour is right for you.
- The hands-on handcraft activities included in this itinerary are not formal classes with trained teachers. They're more about genuine person to person interactions, cultural exchange and learning directly from authentic, traditional artisans at their workplace or home, in their own style.
- We're proud to support and visit several organisations that empower marginalised and disadvantaged women and/or provide vocational training to allow women to earn an income through the production of handcrafts.
- Where possible we stay in heritage and boutique hotels. We aim to provide our guests with an authentic, insightful experience of India's colourful history, elegant architecture and diverse culture. Accommodation on this trip falls in **3 and 4 Star** categories. Please refer to the **Trip Notes** for more information.
- As this itinerary was developed several months prior to departure, minor amendments may occur. We will always keep you fully informed regarding any changes to this itinerary.

Inclusions:

- An arrival transfer from Delhi airport to our tour hotel
- 19 days/18 nights accommodation as per the itinerary
- Meals as per the itinerary (18 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 4 dinners)
- Transport, sightseeing and activities as per the itinerary
- SEVEN hands-on handcraft workshops (noted in **red**): Zari Zardozi embroidery, wood block printing, bandhani (tie & dye), embroidery and thread embellishment, miniature painting, embroidery with the women of the Kalbeliya community and patchwork, appliqué and stitching with a social enterprise which offers an alternative means to earn a livelihood to the families who previously relied on wildlife poaching.
- Several optional opportunities to briefly try your hand at a 'stage' of a handcraft process such as carpet knotting, cotton spinning etc
- Entrance fees to all museums, galleries, sights and excursion venues as per the itinerary
- Fully escorted by a local, accredited English-speaking tour guide and retreat|recreate host, Susan Keeble.

Exclusions:

- International or domestic airfares
- Travel insurance (essential)
- Passports and visas
- Early check in or late check out
- Departure transfers
- Personal spending (souvenirs, laundry, phone, porter charges, etc)
- Optional activities and activities noted in **blue**
- Meals and drinks not included in the itinerary
- Drinks with included meals
- Tips - we'll establish a tips kitty on Day 1 so our local guide can tip on behalf of the group for group activities, as needed. Allow approx. INR10,000 per person TBC

