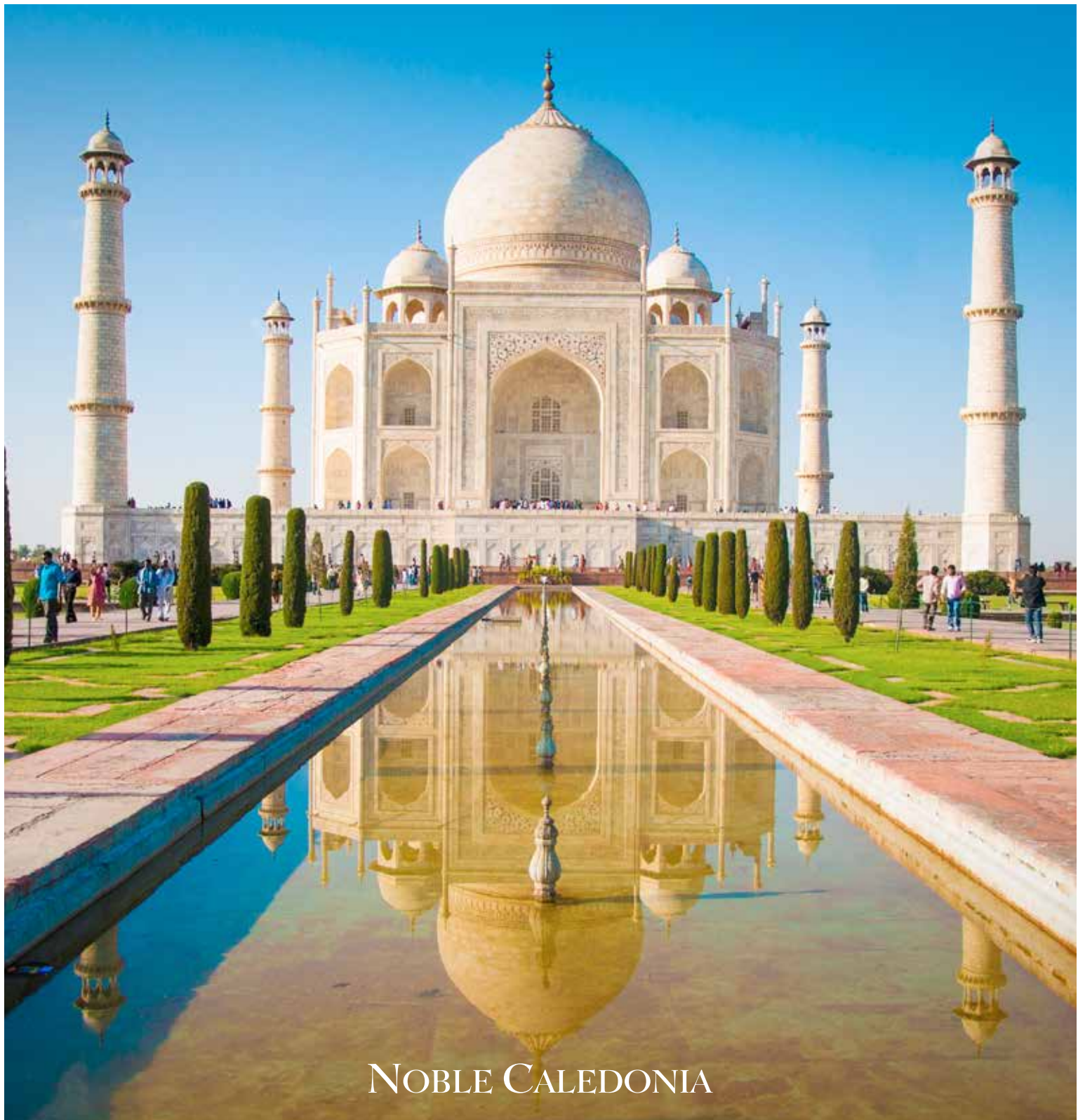


THE DARJEELING MAIL

A JOURNEY ACROSS INDIA BY PRIVATE TRAIN
ABOARD THE DECCAN ODYSSEY

3RD TO 18TH FEBRUARY 2021



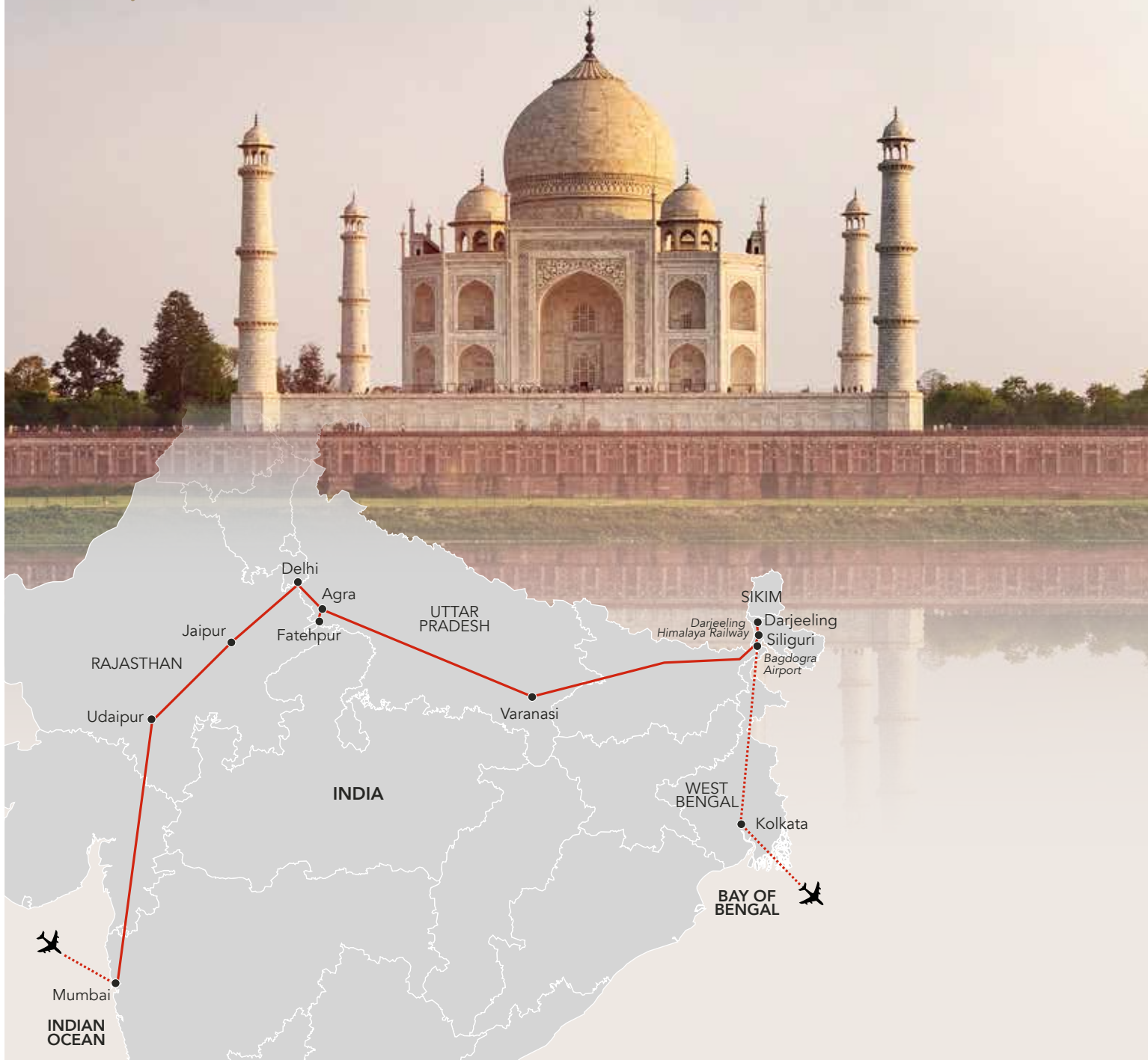
NOBLE CALEDONIA



We are delighted to have joined forces with Golden Eagle Luxury Trains in offering a selection of cabins aboard this fascinating private train journey from Mumbai to Kolkata. The railway arrived in India in 1853 and the country now has one of the world's biggest and busiest railway networks - almost 40,000 miles in all. It is said that trains created modern India more than anything else. What is certain is that today's India couldn't exist without the railways and that travelling by train is by far the best way to see the country as it really is. From the

warm-heartedness of the people to the colourful scenery and wonderful sights, a private rail journey through India is a truly memorable experience.

For thousands of years India has undergone many social and religious invasions and yet has managed to withstand them all. With a history dating back 5000 years, it is home to an amazing array of sacred monuments, ancient ruins, Jain Temples and Buddhist stupas making it an extremely rewarding land to explore. Local guides will enhance our stops along the way as we explore the region's history and culture visiting some truly magnificent sites: the bustling city of Mumbai; the sprawling City Palace in Udaipur; fascinating Jaipur with its Palace of the Winds and spiritual Varanasi. Our private train, the Deccan Odyssey, also winds its way through some extraordinary beautiful landscapes and from the hill station of Darjeeling, at the foothills of the Himalayas, we will board the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway for incredible views of Mount Kanchenjunga. However, the undoubted highlight for many will be the incomparable beauty of the Taj Mahal and a full day is dedicated to visiting this exquisite marble structure that was built by Shah Jahan as a memorial for his third wife.





Lake Palace & Pichola Lake



Gateway of India



Varanasi



Amber Fort

The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Mumbai, India.
Fly by scheduled flight.

Day 2 Mumbai. Arrive today and transfer to the iconic five-star Taj Mahal Palace & Tower Hotel for a luxurious two-night stay. This flagship Taj hotel offers you splendid views of the Arabian Sea and Gateway of India, alongside refined century-old hospitality. The hotel has hosted kings, dignitaries and eminent personalities from across the globe. Deluxe Class guests will stay in the Tower Wing, Presidential Suite guests reside in the Palace Wing.

Day 3 Mumbai. This morning we take a short cruise, weather permitting, to Elephanta Island, a lush island densely wooded with palm, mango and tamarind trees. The atmospheric and fascinating cave complex, which dates back to the 3rd to 5th centuries, was designed to honour the life of Lord Shiva, one of the most auspicious Hindu gods and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We return to the city for lunch at the famous Trishna seafood restaurant and in the afternoon you are free to explore Mumbai independently or visit one of the colourful local markets. This evening a welcome drinks reception is followed by dinner at the hotel where you can get to know your fellow travellers who will be joining you for this Indian odyssey.

Day 4 Mumbai. The compelling city of Mumbai is rich in culture and history. Today we visit the 'Dhobi Ghats', an intriguing outdoor laundry. The dhobi is a traditional laundryman who collects your dirty linen, washes it and returns it neatly pressed. The Ghats are the laundries where they practice this historic tradition. Our tour then takes in Fort Bombay and Gandhi's

House, which is a fascinating museum depicting his inspirational life. Lunch will be served in a local restaurant and later this afternoon we will board our private train, the Deccan Odyssey. Settle into your beautifully appointed cabin and enjoy the hospitable atmosphere of the stylish Bar Lounge Car before experiencing fine Indian or western cuisine prepared by the onboard chefs.

Day 5 Udaipur. We spend a leisurely morning on board as the landscape and spirit of India unfolds before us. We then have the opportunity to listen to a talk on Indian culture before arriving at Udaipur, known as the 'City of Lakes' or 'Venice of the East'. A beguiling tapestry of breathtaking lakes and opulently majestic palaces from the Rajput era await your discovery. This afternoon admire the awe-inspiring beauty of the Lake Palace constructed entirely of marble, which sits on its own island in the shimmering waters of Pichola Lake and visiting the Medieval grandeur of City Palace.

Day 6 Jaipur. With a breakfast arrival into the capital of Rajasthan, the 'Pink City' of Jaipur overwhelms the senses as we embrace its rich and colourful past. This morning we visit the Amber Fort and explore its breathtaking and ornate majesty, including the magnificent Hall of Mirrors. After lunch in a local restaurant, we continue our exploration with a tour of the Jantar Mantar Observatory, the imposing and vast City Palace and the beautiful Hawa Mahal, or Palace of Winds. This delicately stunning, yet enduring monument is constructed entirely of pink sandstone and was built in 1799 to allow royal ladies to discreetly observe everyday life. Finally, if time permits, we explore a famous fabric market before returning to our train to refresh. This evening we dine in the elegant Rambagh

Palace Hotel, originally built in 1835 and once the residence of the Maharaja of Jaipur. The palace retains its elaborate splendour, extravagantly decorated with hand-carved marble 'jalisi' or latticework, sandstone balustrades, cupolas and 'chattris' or cenotaphs, and elaborate Mughal Gardens. Ladies in Rajasthani costumes perform the traditional garlanding 'aarti' and 'tikka' ceremonies while the music of the "Shenai" welcomes you. A delightful display of fireworks is followed by a barbeque with the illuminated palace as a stunning backdrop. Tonight's dinner will be served outdoors on one of the lawns of the palace; a truly memorable end to a fantastic day in the Pink City.

Day 7 Delhi. One of the oldest cities in the world, Delhi is a bustling and vibrant city, famous for its traditional bazaars and street markets. Today's fascinating city tour in this pulsating metropolis will include the Raj Ghat memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, the World Heritage Site of Humayun's Tomb, the first example of Mughal architecture in India, and the towering Indo-Islamic Qutab Minar, the tallest brick minaret in the world at 238 feet (73 metres) which dates from 1368. Tonight, we enjoy a sumptuous dinner on board our private train as we continue our journey across India.

Day 8 Fatehpur Sikri. After breakfast, we visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Fatehpur Sikri. Known as a 'ghost city' this red sandstone town was abandoned only shortly after being built due to lack of water in 1585. This afternoon our journey takes us to Agra Fort, a magnificent structure that dominates the skyline and acted as the main residence for emperors of the Mughal Dynasty until 1638. Its red sandstone walls run for 2.5 kilometres and contain

many fairy tale palaces and two beautifully preserved mosques.

Day 9 Taj Mahal (Agra). Today is devoted to visiting the impossibly beautiful Taj Mahal, built entirely of white marble on the south bank of the Yamuna river and indisputably the most famous building in the world. Completed in 1648 by Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan, the Taj Mahal is a mausoleum for his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, and took 22 years and 20,000 artisan workers to complete. Nowhere else on the planet will you experience such a poignant architectural statement dedicated to the enduring nature of human love.

Day 10 Varanasi. Varanasi simply has to be experienced to be understood. Our early morning arrival at Varanasi, one of India's most sacred and spiritual places, offers the opportunity to discover what is believed to be the oldest continually inhabited city in the world. Situated on the banks of the River Ganges this cultural and religious centre, known as the City of Light and established between 3 - 5,000 years ago, is a focus for Hindu pilgrims who bathe in the sacred waters of the Ganges and perform funeral rites. We are privileged to witness these time-honoured ceremonies before departing for a private river cruise. Our exploration of Varanasi is completed with a guided walk through the winding ancient streets, home to some 2000 temples, of this remarkable city.

Day 11 Darjeeling. Today we leave the Deccan Odyssey and embark on a spectacular journey to the hill station of Darjeeling. Choose to travel either by bus (3-4 hours) or embark on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, itself listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which takes about six hours from Tindharia. Also known as the 'Toy Train' it is a two foot (610 millimetre) narrow-gauge



Mount Kanchenjunga



Tea Plantation



Victoria Memorial, Kolkata

railway. Travelling through awe-inspiring scenery our locomotive zigzags and loops gaining height to reach the cooler air of India's most famous hill station. We climb to Ghum, which situated at 7407 feet (2,258 metres) and is the highest railway station in India, where snow-covered Mount Kanchenjunga (third highest in the world) dominates the skyline, before dropping into Darjeeling itself, first crossing the graceful loop at Batasia. A packed lunch is served on board the train before our arrival into colonial Darjeeling. We will have dinner in the Hotel Mayfair (or similar), where we will stay for three nights. Perched on a picturesque hill with beautiful views of the valley, the Mayfair is a heritage hotel that exudes old-world charm and quiet elegance.

Day 12 Darjeeling. We awaken to the breathtaking scenery of Mount Kanchenjunga and this morning we can ride the DHR up to Batasia Loop and Ghum, climbing over 600 feet during its eight kilometre journey. The senses reel as we experience the chaotic nature of roadside life, passing within inches of colourful shops, houses and enthralling monasteries. Our afternoon tour of Darjeeling provides a wonderful opportunity to experience the elegant grandeur of colonial life, as well as the contrasting culture of a Tibetan refugee centre and an absorbing visit to the Himalayan Institute where we learn about some of the famous mountaineering expeditions.

Day 13 Darjeeling. This morning, weather permitting, we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to watch the sun rising over the snow-capped Himalayas, with Mount Everest rising majestically 200 miles away on the horizon. Your early morning trip to Tiger Hill is a quintessential experience that captures the very character of one

of our planet's most overwhelming natural sights. This afternoon we visit a local tea plantation and sample the freshest cup of tea most of us are ever likely to taste.

Day 14 Darjeeling to Kolkata.

After an English breakfast, we leave this tranquil haven to embark on a private transfer from Darjeeling to Bagdogra airport for a short commercial flight to Kolkata. On the way enjoy panoramic views of the extensive tea plantations that unfurl around us. On arrival we transfer to the five-star Taj Bengal hotel for a two night stay, a landmark five-star hotel in downtown Kolkata. Prominent landmarks - Victoria Memorial, Royal Calcutta Race Course, Horticultural Gardens, National Library, Eden Gardens and the Alipore Zoological Gardens - are all within walking distance.

Day 15 Kolkata. Kolkata is a sensory delight and cultural

extravaganza that is constantly evolving. After breakfast, we spend the day exploring and absorbing the many sights that comprise this enthralling city that was once India's capital. Our tour includes a visit to the Victoria Memorial, one of the finest and most prominent buildings in Kolkata which houses a museum dedicated to the history of India. We then move on to Dalhousie Square, the bustling hub of English colonial power and trade during the two centuries of British rule. Our final stop is South Park Cemetery, an atmospheric and still space within the clamour of modern day Kolkata. This evening we say goodbye to our fellow travelling companions who have shared this remarkable journey with us at our farewell dinner.

Day 16 Kolkata to London. In the early morning transfer to Kolkata airport for the scheduled flight to London.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

CATEGORY	PRICES
Deluxe Class	£12895
Presidential Suite	£24595
Deluxe Class for sole use	£18795

Price Includes: Economy class scheduled air travel • Internal flight from Bagdogra (Darjeeling) to Kolkata • Two nights hotel accommodation in Mumbai • Seven nights aboard the Deccan Odyssey • Three nights hotel accommodation in Darjeeling • Two nights hotel accommodation in Kolkata • Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily except on days 2 & 16 • Wine with lunch & dinner • Transfer on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway • Excursions • Services of a Train Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Porterage.
Not Included: Travel insurance, Indian visa, lunch & dinner on days 2 & 16.

Please note: A 20% deposit is required when booking this tour. Please also note that a visa is required for India along with at least six months' passport validity from the date of arrival into India and two blank passport pages. Applications can begin 120 days before entry and the application form must be completed online. This information is correct at the time of printing and should the information change, we will be in touch with booked passengers with updated guidelines.

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DECCAN ODYSSEY

To travel aboard the Deccan Odyssey is to experience the finest traditions of rail travel and it is the perfect way to experience the colour, character and amazing diversity of India in comfort and style. We are delighted to be working with Golden Eagle Luxury Trains in offering a selection of cabins aboard this private train which was specially built to cater for the demands of today's most discerning traveller, accommodating a maximum of 62 guests in modern, air-conditioned sleeping carriages. On board, the spacious and comfortable cabins, the exceptionally high-quality dining and the attention to detail of the staff combine to create what is effectively a rolling luxury hotel.

Your Suite/Cabin

There are two categories of compartment on board the Deccan Odyssey, the Presidential Suites and Deluxe Class Cabins, and facilities in both include air-conditioning, television screen with USB and HDMI ports, complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water and a hairdryer. A laundry service is also available throughout the tour for a fee. All of the accommodation is relatively spacious, thanks to the generous proportions of the country's broad-gauge railway.

Presidential Suites: These are the most spacious cabins available, measuring 191 square feet and benefiting from a large and luxurious king-size bed, separate lounge/seating area with writing desk and two private en-suite bathrooms with shower.

Deluxe Class Cabins: These cabins measure 95 square feet and are well proportioned with a twin or a queen-size bed and a private en-suite bathroom with shower.



Presidential Suite



Presidential Suite Lounge



Deluxe Double Cabin



Deluxe Twin Cabin



Restaurant

Your Space

The well-appointed Bar Lounge Car offers the perfect surroundings for a quiet drink with your fellow passengers. A wide selection of both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks is served, with the bar staying open until the last guest leaves. There is also a dedicated Spa Car where you can enjoy a traditional Ayurvedic massage, work out in the gym, visit the onboard hairdressing salon or enjoy the heat of the sauna while the train is underway. Alternatively, you can utilise the facilities in the Reception Car which has a library and reading area, and a fully-equipped business centre.



Lounge

Your Dining

Your private train includes two splendid Restaurant Cars, offering a wonderful variety of international cuisine. Prepared and served in one sitting with the highest attention to detail, the Indian and international food offered is to the highest culinary standard. For lunch and dinner, you will be served by the restaurant staff in traditional Maharashtrian attire and accompanying both meals will be a selection of complimentary local wines and beer. Traditionally decorated, these beautifully designed cars offer a superb and relaxed setting in which to enjoy your meals and watch India's remarkable scenery unfold.



Spa



Food on board

Life On Board

The Deccan Odyssey is designed with inspiration taken from the imperial carriages used by the Maharajas when travelling through India and throughout your tour you can expect a service which is attentive, friendly and discreet. Your car attendants provide housekeeping and bedding turndown services and your Train Tour Manager is there to coordinate all of the elements, ensuring a personal service and informative tour. On board there is a Wi-Fi box in each cabin to provide internet connection though coverage may be limited when travelling through more remote locations. For your comfort, the dress code on board is casual.



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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.
 Cover image: Taj Mahal