

SECRETS OF WILD INDIA

AN ESCORTED TOUR OF THE WILDLIFE & WONDERS OF WESTERN INDIA
INCLUDING SEVEN NIGHTS ABOARD THE
DECCAN ODYSSEY PRIVATE TRAIN

12TH TO 26TH OCTOBER 2024 & 3RD TO 17TH MAY 2025

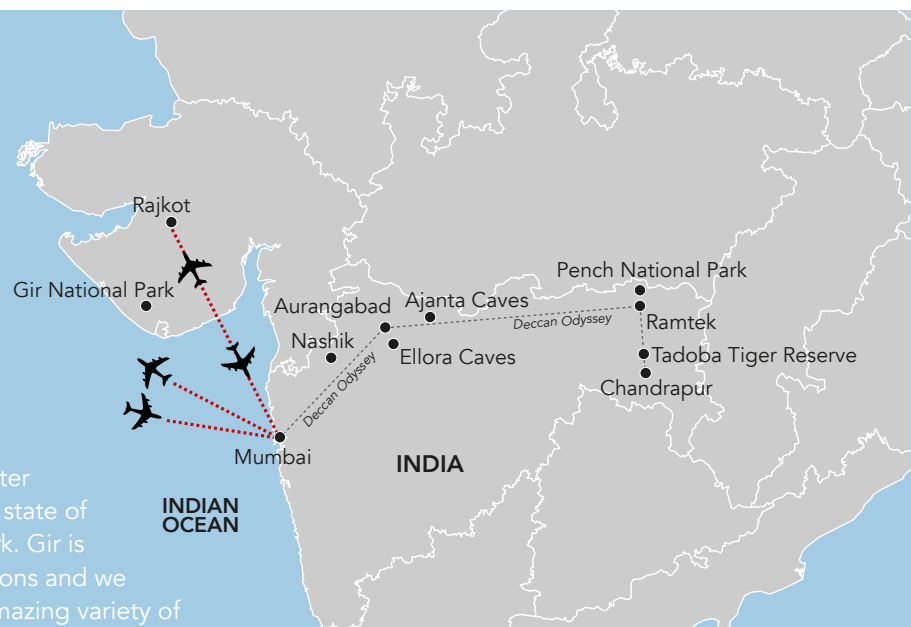


NOBLE CALEDONIA

Diverse seems such an inadequate word when describing India. The full spectrum of climates, cultures and wildlife are all there in their glory and probably the biggest mistake any visitor can make is to attempt to see too much all in one trip. Our itinerary has therefore been designed to focus in the main on the western seaboard of India as we believe that exploring an area in depth and travelling with a small like-minded group provides the most rewarding experience.

The west of India is dominated by Mumbai and after time spent exploring this vibrant city we fly to the state of Gujarat for our three night stay in Gir National Park. Gir is the last home of the remaining 500 or so Asiatic lions and we will explore by jeep in the hope of spotting the amazing variety of wildlife including sambar deer, jackal, hyenas and crocodile. Upon return to Mumbai we board our luxury train, the Deccan Odyssey, for an unforgettable seven night journey. We will visit the Ellora Caves, the magnificent complex of rock-cut shrines, Ajanta Caves, masterpieces of Buddhist religious art, and the beautiful wine capital of India, Nashik. Our train will also take us into central India to explore Pench National Park and Tadoba Tiger Reserve in search of the apex predator, the elusive Bengal tiger, where dense forests and sprawling grasslands brim with colourful birds, insects, and a multitude of other animals.

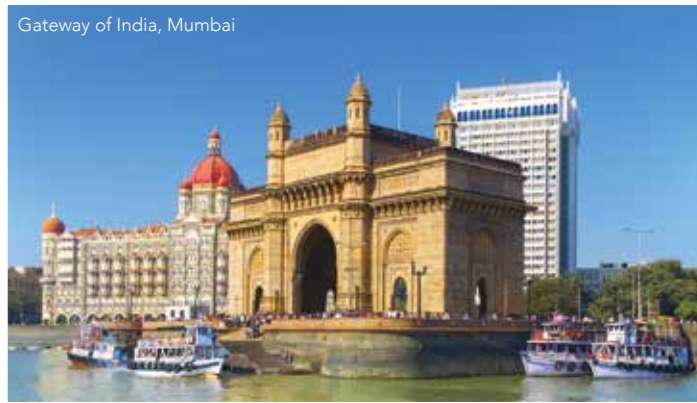
There is something evocative about India and trains, no doubt in some part due to our romantic memories of the Raj, but also because travelling by train brings you close to the country, allowing a glimpse of India at eye level. Our time in this region will be an eye-opening experience and offers the opportunity to explore the wildlife, scenic beauty and fascinating culture of a lesser visited region of India.



Mumbai



Kailasa Temple, Ellora Caves



Gateway of India, Mumbai



Asiatic lion, Gir National Park



Sloth bear

THE ITINERARY

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

Day 2 Mumbai. Arrive this morning and transfer to the Trident, Nariman Point for our two night stay. The remainder of the day is free to relax and enjoy the hotel facilities before we meet for dinner this evening. (D)

Day 3 Mumbai. Mumbai is a cluster of seven islands which were first home to the 'Koli' fisherman, who still occupy parts of the city shoreline today. Mumbai was derived from 'Mumba' the name of the Hindu goddess 'Mumbadevi' and 'Aai' – Mother in the local Marathi language. First ceded to the Portuguese, the British Government took possession of the islands in 1665 before leasing them to the English East India Company who founded the port and saw the city grow in size and importance. This morning we explore the city and will see the prominent landmarks visiting the Gateway of India, Mani Bhavan, the former residence of Mahatma Gandhi when he stayed in Mumbai from 1917 to 1934, and Dhobi Ghat where we can observe the vast open air Indian laundry. The remainder of the day is at leisure before we meet for dinner. (B, D)

Day 4 Mumbai to Gir National Park. After breakfast we transfer to the airport for our short flight to Rajkot. On arrival we drive (approximately 4 hours) to the Gir National Park arriving this evening. Check in to the Gir Serai and enjoy dinner at the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

Days 5 & 6 Gir National Park. Created as a wildlife sanctuary in 1965 to conserve the Asiatic lions, this is the only place in the world outside Africa to see lions in their natural habitat. The park is also home to sambar deer, jackal, hyenas and crocodile as well as 425 species of bird including serpent eagle, Asian paradise flycatcher and fantail. Over our two days in the park we will take morning and evening jeep safaris on the lookout for wildlife or alternatively relax and enjoy the hotel facilities. (B, L, D)

Day 7 Gir National Park to Mumbai. Return to Rajkot airport this morning as we take our scheduled flight to Mumbai. Arrive this evening and transfer to the Trident, Nariman Point for an overnight stay. (B, L, D)

Day 8 Embark Deccan Odyssey. This morning is free to explore further at your own pace or enjoy the hotel facilities. In the early afternoon we transfer to the Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus to board the Deccan Odyssey for our seven night journey. After boarding and settling into our cabins the train departs in the early evening. (B, D)

Day 9 Ellora Caves. Today, the Deccan Odyssey will arrive at Aurangabad where we have some free time to explore this lovely city named after the last

Great Mughal Aurangzeb. After an early lunch we take a scenic drive to the Ellora Caves. Carved into the side of a basaltic hill 30 kilometres from the city, it is probably the finest specimen of cave-temple architecture in India. This magnificent site encompasses 34 rock-cut shrines that represent Buddhist, Jain and Hindu art. The 12 caves to the south are Buddhist, the 17 in the centre Hindu, and the five caves to the north are Jain. The most extraordinary part of the Ellora caves is perhaps the Kailasa Temple. Believed to be a replica of Shiva's celestial abode on Mount Kailash, it is the perfect example of rock cut architecture and an engineering marvel. Afterwards we visit the soaring Daulatabad Fort. Occupied since at least 100 BC, it is home to the remains of Buddhist caves similar to those at Ajanta and Ellora. (B, L, D)

Day 10 Aurangabad. This morning we explore the old city of Aurangabad. Visit Bibi-ka-Maqbara, the last resting place of Dilras Banu, Aurangzeb's wife. Built between 1651 and 1661 by her son, Prince Azam Shah, the monument is also called the 'Taj of the Deccan' and was built to rival the brilliance of the Taj Mahal. Later we visit a facility that specialises in the weaving of Himroo fabric. Himroo has been associated with Aurangabad since the 14th century when Muhammad Tughlaq made Aurangabad his capital. This particular fabric features Persian designs woven with silver and gold threads. It is named from Hum-ruh, which means 'similar' in Persian, as it is a replica of the Kum Khwab fabric that was much admired in royal courts before Himroo took its place. After lunch on board we can take in the sight of ever-changing colours and landscapes of Maharashtra as the Deccan Odyssey continues its journey. (B, L, D)

Day 11 Pench National Park. Today the Deccan Odyssey will stop at Ramtek, our base for a visit to Pench National Park. It is named after the Pench River, which wanders through it like a python, splitting it into almost equal halves. The park is vastly rich in biodiversity, its terrain defined by hills, valleys and the occasional precipitous slope. This important ecosystem supports an abundance of flora and fauna, which includes a rich diversity of aquatic life. After an exciting game drive, return to the Deccan Odyssey for a relaxed brunch on board. In the afternoon, get ready for your second adventure into the wild. For the uninitiated, the Pench National Park combines four different forest regions in one. It features an extravagance of trees, shrubs, grasses, climbers, weeds and herbs, with teak being the most prominent of the tree species. The birdlife here is equally abundant with both resident and migratory birds like Malabar pied hornbills, Indian pittas, ospreys and grey-headed fishing eagles. The park is also home to white-eyed buzzards, storks, waterfowls, four endangered vulture species, and the green pigeon, which is the state bird of Maharashtra. After a thrilling day at Pench, drive back to Ramtek station to board the Deccan Odyssey. (B, L, D)



Leopard



Indian Roller



Ajanta Caves



Taj of the Deccan, Aurangabad

Day 12 Tadoba Tiger Reserve. Today, the Deccan Odyssey will arrive at Chandrapur station, for your early morning safari into the Tadoba Tiger Reserve. Also called the Land of Tigers, this reserve is known for its high tiger density. It is not unusual to spot tigers and wild dogs here. You also have plenty of opportunities for close encounters with leopards, sloth bears, gaurs (the Indian bison), the rusty spotted cat, ratels, various species of deer and more. After an exhilarating morning, enjoy a late breakfast at the Tiger Trails Lodge. Follow this with a documentary on wildlife or interact with the naturalist. After lunch at the lodge we drive back to Chandrapur station to board the Deccan Odyssey. (B, L, D)

Day 13 Ajanta Caves. Drive this morning to the Ajanta Caves, a World Heritage Site which is an architectural wonder of its time. The 30 rock-hewn Buddhist caves at Ajanta have been expertly carved and are ornamented with sculptures and paintings of Buddhist religious art. It impeccably presents a universal pictorial art as well as the fusion of Buddhist and Hindu faith. After your trip to Ajanta, return to the Deccan Odyssey for lunch as it makes its way to Nashik. The rest of the day is at leisure. Relax and enjoy some of the recreational activities available on board. Indulge in a relaxing massage in the spa, watch a film or learn the rules of 'carrom', a popular Indian board game, from a Deccan Odyssey team member. (B, L, D)

Day 14 Nashik & Godavari Ghats. Arrive this morning at the holy city of Nashik, which is rapidly gaining popularity as the wine capital of the country. Spend the morning walking along the Godavari ghats and witness several important Hindu rituals being performed. Then proceed to the lively Wednesday market, which sells everything from freshly caught catfish to cow dung cakes and many things in between. Later we drive to the Grover Zampa vineyards for a special tour of one of the finest wine producing facilities of India. Walk through vines laden with Chenin, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes. Explore the age old 'methode traditionnelle' used to make one of the best known Indian brands of sparkling wine. Let the sommelier introduce your taste buds to their most exquisite creations of white, red, rose, and sparkling wines and experiment pairing them with your meal at the vineyards. After a lavish lunch, return to the Deccan Odyssey and set forth for Mumbai, the last leg of the journey. (B, L, D)

Day 15 Mumbai to London. Disembark the Deccan Odyssey this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London. Arrive this afternoon. (B)



Nashik vineyards

EXPLORING & TRANSPORTATION

We have planned the itinerary to be less strenuous than most to the region, however, the tour will require walking through busy streets in warm temperatures, navigating through a number of train carriages to access the public areas from your compartment and travelling on unpaved roads during jeep safaris. Also, many of the sites are reached by uneven steps without handrails. To best enjoy your experiences in India, you should be in good physical condition.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Twin/Double **£8295**

Twin for sole use: **£10495**

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Three nights hotel accommodation in Mumbai • Three nights hotel accommodation at Gir National Park • Seven nights accommodation aboard the Deccan Odyssey Train • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Soft drinks with all included lunches and dinners & also Indian Beer and wine with included lunches and dinners in Mumbai • Excursions • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance, Indian visa, alcoholic drinks aboard the Deccan Odyssey and at Gir National Park. Please note that Gujarat is a dry state and alcohol consumption is prohibited.

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 20 participants.

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 have been given an allocation of cabins aboard the train which comprises of 21 luxuriously appointed coaches. Out of these 21 coaches, 11 are to accommodate guests and the rest are used for different purposes such as dining, lounge, conference car and health spa. 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.



Lounge

Your Cabin

We will be accommodated in the Deluxe Class cabins which measure 95 square feet and are well proportioned with a twin or a queen-size bed and a private en-suite bathroom with shower. The facilities 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.

Your Space

The well-appointed Bar Lounge Car offers the perfect surroundings for a quiet drink with your fellow passengers. There is also a dedicated Spa Car where you can enjoy a traditional Ayurvedic massage. Alternatively, you can utilise the facilities in the Reception Car which has a library and reading area, and a fully-equipped business centre.

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. 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.

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 turn-down services and your Train Tour Manager is there to coordinate all of the elements, ensuring a personal service and informative tour. Please note that Wi-Fi coverage may be limited when travelling through more remote locations. For your comfort, the dress code on board is casual.



Restaurant



Deluxe Double Cabin



Deluxe Twin Cabin



Spa



Food on board

YOUR ACCOMMODATION

For our escorted tour, in addition to seven nights spent aboard the Deccan Odyssey, you will also be staying at the following two properties:

Trident, Nariman Point, Mumbai

Nestled in the heart of vibrant and bustling Mumbai lies the five-star Trident, Nariman Point. Soaring 35 storeys high, it offers panoramic views of Marine Drive and is one of Mumbai's finest hotels. The 586 rooms and suites offer stunning views of the ocean and the Mumbai city skyline and are decorated in serene colours with contemporary furnishings. Spacious and well-appointed with all modern amenities including complimentary Wi-Fi, marble bathrooms and white linen, the rooms are complemented by attentive yet unobtrusive service. There is a lovely pool, raised above the seafront with views out to sea, an excellent spa with a range of Ayurvedic and Western treatments and a large fitness centre. The highlight of your stay, though, will most certainly be an early morning or late evening walk down the promenade to take in the sea breeze and feel the pulse of Mumbai.



View from hotel



Premier Room



Lobby



The Verandah

Gir Serai, Gir National Park

Set on the banks of Hiran River and surrounded by jungles, Gir Serai is a luxury 31-room nature retreat designed for intimate stays in the home of the magnificent Asiatic lion. Spacious, well-equipped rooms and suites open out to lush views of the garden and swimming pool. The pace of life is unhurried. Guests wake up to calls of birds and serious birders can spend hours absorbed in the wildlife library at the charming Tea Lounge which offers breathtaking river views. Occasionally, a low-pitched roar reverberates around the hotel, signalling a call to adventure from the king of the jungle. Gir Serai is the only hotel in the park with two private vehicles and experienced local drivers to ensure authentic, open-jeep safari experiences. The Gir Serai experience is rooted in local culture. Gum Tree – the multi-cuisine restaurant - serves the famed and fiery Kathiyawadi cuisine, along with a choice of Indian and select global delicacies.



Exterior view



Double Room



Reception area



Pool

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request. Itinerary and accommodation subject to change. Wildlife viewings can not be guaranteed.
Cover image: Tadoba Tiger Reserve.