

rajasthan cycle challenge, india



Your expedition begins in India's bustling capital, with its labyrinth of streets and markets, crowded with exotic produce and a bewildering mix of people. From here you move on to Agra, home of the Taj Mahal, where you can explore one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the monument before your biking challenge begins.

The Rajasthan region offers dramatic desert landscape, fantastic wildlife, exquisite forts, bustling cities and rural life that seems frozen in time. You will be among the first 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.



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. Your ride ends here in Rajasthan's capital city, whose welcoming air ends your challenge idyllically.

This cycling challenge allows you to experience the life and culture of India firsthand. 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.

Day 1: London to Delhi

Your flight will depart from London to Delhi. Our Charity Challenge representative will be there to assist you with check-in.

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. Here you can 'shop 'til you drop', or take in Delhi's sights. Take a visit to 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 early morning 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

1631-1653 in memory of his beloved wife, with thousands of semi-precious stones inlaid. You will have time to explore the Taj Mahal. In the afternoon, you will prepare your bikes for the cycle ahead and meet your support team. Overnight hotel in Agra.



Day 4: Taj Mahal to Fatephur Sikri - 40km approx / 4-5hrs

Now the challenge begins; a bikers dream! The terrain you will ride on consists of small roads, some of which are dirt tracks but most of which are tarmaced. This will not be a luxury, however, 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 – 50km 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 bird, 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. Overnight in hotel.

Day 6: Keoladeo Ghana National Park to Karauli – 113km approx / 8-9hrs

Continuing on 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 martial race. Their rule here has left them a legacy of magnificent forts, palaces and mansions. The region feels like a living museum. Camel and donkey carts still roam the streets, while the locals wear the bright and colourful dresses of their ancestors. The lifestyle is traditional, with the region's economy revolving around ancient forms of agriculture, and older trades such as clay pottery and the printing of fabrics.

Overnight in Maharaja's Palace.



Day 7: Karauli to Ranthambore National Park – 115km approx / 8-9 hrs

Today you will cycle to Ranthambore National Park, one of the prime examples of Project Tiger's conservation efforts in Rajasthan and 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 samba, 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 10th century. The lower ground alternates between open bushland 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 and guesthouse.



Day 8: Ranthambore National Park to Bhanderej – 45km approx / 5-6hrs

An early start for your sunrise safari into Ranthambore Park. You will be passing through a variety of terrain and staying in an ancient fort and palace of the Maharaja's, taking in Hindu settlements, temples and shepherd encampments en route. While crossing the area, reflect on 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 – 55km / 5-6hrs

Today you head towards the end of your challenge, entering Jaipur, the vibrant capital of Rajasthan popularly known as the 'Pink City' (the colour associated with hospitality). The barren hills and ancient forts that surround Jaipur enclose a buzzing metropolis, a place of wild contrasts and extremes. Vegetable laden camel carts thread their way through the streets jam-packed with rickshaws, bicycles, tempos, motorcycles and pedestrians dodging the traffic.



Traditionally dressed Rajput men sporting bright turbans and swashbuckling moustaches discuss village politics outside restaurants and roadside stalls. After your finishing lunch spend the afternoon having a well earned rest or explore the city. You will have time to shop, with a fantastic variety of souvenirs available. There are many handicrafts, ranging from papier-mâché puppets to exquisitely carved furniture. Jaipur is also well known for its precious and semi-precious gems, marble statues, costume jewellery and textile prints, among other specialities. There is a timeless appeal to Jaipur's colourful bazaars.

In the evening we celebrate the completion of our cycle challenge through India with a Rajasthani Party, comprising traditional banquet, folk music and dancing at the Maharaja's 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 patterns, wildlife movements, and the strength of the group. Indian travel can also throw up limitations of its own! We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary; however, we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that might occur. In all such circumstances, your expedition leader will have the final say.

Optional extension:

Jaipur City Extension:

- Stay two extra nights in Jaipur to explore the city
- Head North of Jaipur to Amber Fort and stop for refreshments at the Polo Bar.
- Explore the Observatory, City Palace, Hawa Mahal and Johri Bazaar before an afternoon train back to Delhi.
- Overnight in Delhi.

To find out more information, visit the Rajasthan Cycle Challenge page on our website or click on "extensions" in your member's area.