

Work with elephants in Jaipur, India

Project Overview

Want to help care for these big beauties?

What better place to be situated than near the city of Jaipur caring for these magnificent animals. Working in the village of Amber close to the royal Amber Fort you will be looking after the elephants after they have returned from their work at the Fort. These elephants work hard carrying tourists around the Fort and need some loving care after their long morning. You will be helping them to relax and unwind by providing them with food, attention and even full body massages!



Trip Highlights:

- Spending time with and learning about these incredible animals
- Exploring the stunning city of Jaipur
- Taking a weekend trip to Jaisalmer - Rajasthan's historic desert fort

What the project does and why it needs you!

The aim of this project is to help the mahouts care and look after their majestic animals. The project is based in the village of Amber also known as the 'Elephant Village' where the elephants work daily at the nearby royal Amber Fort. The Fort attracts tourists with its ornate and intricate carvings on the walls and ceilings along with its grand appearance and warm ambience. The main attraction of the Fort however is the royal elephant ride. The elephants work hard and look forward to their return to the nearby village of Amber where they are cared for by their owners and you! The elephants are viewed as a means of income and the additional care and attention you can give is very important to both them and their owners.

Who is it for?

This project is for anyone with a love for these magnificent animals and India. It is a great hands on experience but also hard work! This project involves a variety of activities and will suit anyone who loves the outdoors and wants to get to know more about elephants.

What you`ll be doing

Your main task will be to help the owner of the elephant by cleaning up after the animals, preparing their food and feeding them. After their return from their work you will be helping them to relax by massaging them and giving them the care and attention they need. There are three shift patterns for your work;

5am to 11am - you will be bathing, cleaning and preparing the elephant to go the Fort, cleaning the area and working with any baby elephants.

11am to 4pm - cleaning the area, fetching water and feeding the elephant.

4pm to 7.30pm - preparing chapatis for the elephant and feeding it along with providing water for it and cleaning the area.

Activities will also depend on the weather and the requirements of the project so be prepared to be flexible.

Where you`ll be staying

You will be staying in one of two basic but clean homestay accommodations with shared rooms in Jaipur around 9kms from the project itself. One accommodation is located opposite a lovely park, the other has access to a terrace garden and the great city of Jaipur is on your doorstep to explore in the evening. The nearest shops and banks are situated 1km away. There is a bathroom with a bath, hot water and western style toilet.

Project Advice

As you will no doubt be getting quite dirty remember to bring clothes with you that you will not mind getting dirty or leaving behind; freeing up extra space in your backpack for those souvenirs! You should dress modestly in t-shirts and the minimum of three-quarter-length trousers. You may want to bring boots and gloves for cleaning, a face mask for the smell, a mosquito net for your room and don` t forget any playing cards and books!

When you arrive

If you time your arrival to one of the designated arrival dates then airport pick-up is completely free. You should book your flights to travel to Jaipur Sanganeer Airport (airport code JAI). Should you require a different pick-up time or any additional nights at the orientation accommodation, for example if you arrive a day or two early, you can arrange this through the i-to-i office.

Fast Facts

Project Information

- Project Duration: Min 2 weeks - Max 4 weeks
- Project Costs: £549.00 for 2 weeks, £110.00 for every week thereafter
- Location of project:Jaipur
- Arrival Airport:Jaipur (airport code JAI)
- Activities:Caring for the elephants, cleaning the area, preparing food and feeding the elephants, helping them relax through massage
- Working Hours:3 shift patterns; Monday to Friday 5am to 11am, 11am to 4pm or 4pm to 7.30pm.
- Getting to the project:35 - 40 minutes auto rickshaw ride (budget approximately US\$50 per week)
- Requirements:Minimum age 18

What's Included

- Accommodation:Shared room in homestay.
- Food:All meals
- Airport Pickup:Included on arrival date. Ask us for details if you're arriving early!
- Training:In-country orientation
- Support:Pre-departure helpdesk, Local in-country team and 24hr emergency support

What's not included

- Flights, Insurance, Visas, Return Airport transfer, Local Transport

Country Guide - India

A little bit of history...

For over 5000 years the subcontinent of India, has seen the rise and fall of a succession of great empires, regional states and colonial powers. The first great Indian empire-builders were the Harrapans (The Indus Valley Civilisation) who flourished across parts of modern-day India and Pakistan from around 3500BC. The Harrapans opened up trade routes with Mesopotamia, built carefully planned cities and developed a pantheon of deities that over the years morphed into the Hindu deities Shiva and Kali. After the Harrapans came the Aryans who developed the caste system and wrote the sacred Vedas (including the Upanishads and the Brahmanas). These philosophical teachings were instrumental in the development of Buddhism and Hinduism – the religious foundation stones of the Indian cultural psyche.

After a brief incursion by Alexander the Great in 326BC, the Mauryan Empire gained control of much of central, eastern and western India. The first Indian empire to embrace Buddhism, the Mauryan civilisation reached its peak under the guidance of Emperor Ashoka and a long period of political stability enabled the caste system to flourish and allowed many cultural and technological advancements to be made. During this time envoys were sent to Sri Lanka and Nepal to spread the word of Buddhism.



Over the next 1000 years many empires gained control of regions of India – the Gupta's in central India, the Chola's and The Vijayanagar Empire in the south – but it wasn't until the emergence of the Islamic empire of the Mughals that the whole of India came under the control of one power.

The Mughals ushered in a golden age of art and architecture, and have left us with many of the most recognisable symbols of Indian grandeur and architectural excellence – Shah Jahan's Taj Mahal, Agra's Red Fort and Humayun's Tomb in Delhi. They ruled from the early 16th century until the rise of the British East India Company and the advent of European control of the Indian subcontinent.

After much jostling for position, the British emerged as the dominant colonial force in India. While Portugal held sway over parts of Goa and Kerala and the French had small colonies such as Pondicherry, British influence spread from the verdant valleys of Kashmir to southern shores of Tamil Nadu. India was now under British rule and would stay that way for over 150 years – the British Raj had been born.

The European colonisers exploited the many natural resources found in India and the excesses of the Raj were many and spectacular. Every summer, as the heat in the central plains grew unbearable and the streets of Delhi shimmered in the heat haze, the entire apparatus of government was moved more than 300km north to Shimla in Himachal Pradesh. To this day Shimla - a strange little town perched high in the foothills of the Himalaya - resembles nothing quite so much as a Victorian English village - complete with parish church and fun fair!

The excesses of British rule created widespread resentment across India and a succession of uprisings and civil disputes led to independence from British rule in 1947 and the partition of India and Pakistan. Following independence much blood was spilled as Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims tried to ensure their place in the uncertain future of the subcontinent. Many wars have since been fought between Pakistan and India and to this day the Kashmiri borders are still disputed and fought over. The pristine valleys and glacial lakes still reverberate to the sound of gunfire and army convoys ply their trade across the mountain passes of the Jammu and Kashmir.

India's recent history has seen relative peace and since the recent earthquake that hit Pakistan and Indian Kashmir, relations between the two countries have greatly improved. Although poverty and deprivation are still endemic in India, economic strides are being made and India now has a reputation as one of the world's leading e-business nations.

Best time to go...

Due to the sheer size and the complex geography of the subcontinent, Indian weather is as complex as Indian history. While the people of the central plains are searching for shade and respite from the heat, the inhabitants of the Jammu and Kashmir are waiting for the last snows of winter to recede.

From as early as February the whole continent gradually begins to heat up and by May temperatures of 45C are commonplace. As the hot season drags on the country takes a collective deep breath and waits in anticipation of the south-west monsoon. When the monsoon finally hits, the hot, dry and dusty conditions are gradually replaced by intermittent heavy downfalls. It doesn't rain all the time during monsoon, but it rains every day – heavy tropical showers are punctuated by warm sunshine that turns the parched subcontinent into something of a mudbath. During this time of year, travel can be difficult if not downright dangerous: rivers break their banks, floods bring cities to a standstill and the destructive power of the monsoon is clear for all to see. In 2005 parts of Mumbai were under 5 feet of flood water and hundreds of the cities slum dwellers lost their lives. After the south-west monsoon has subsided, the south eastern coast (primarily Kerala, Karnataka and Goa) experience a short but intense second monsoon.

When the rains have finally cleared the country experiences a brief but beautiful spell of warm sunny weather. The period from October until around early February sees much of the country experiencing comfortable conditions that are ideal travelling weather for foreign visitors. That being said, in the far north (Kashmir, Ladakh and parts of Himachal Pradesh) winter has taken hold, snow covers the mountains and passes up into the Himalayan Plateau shut down as early as September 16th.

Getting around...

Air

Travel in India is unlike anywhere else on the planet, the distances are huge, booking tickets can be tricky and comfort is often at a premium. If you are short on time or just don't want the many hassles of travelling through India, flying can be a good option. Local airlines such as Deccan, Kingfisher, Jet Airways and Indian Airlines offer services to destinations across the country.

Rail

India is home to the world's largest railway system and offers the resilient traveller some of the greatest rail journeys known to man. Journeys can be long - Delhi to Chennai comes in at around 30 hours – but when you travel by train in India you get to see the vast complexity and natural beauty of the subcontinent roll past in all its glory.

If you decide to travel by train, the complex issue of booking a ticket must be addressed. First you'll need to decide what class you wish to travel in: this can be tricky. There are 6 classes: 1st Class air-con (1A), 2-tier air-con (2A), 3-tier air-con (3A), chair car (CC), Sleeper (SL) and Second (II). For short journeys second is adequate, unless it's really hot then it's well worth paying for chair car. For longer journeys sleeper offers a cheap option with the added bonus of being able to mingle with the Indian masses. When the majority of Indians travel long distances by train, sleeper is their class of choice. Much has been said and written about the pitfalls of travelling by sleeper, but in my experience, it is the best way to truly experience Indian rail travel. 1A, 2A and 3A are more comfortable, but significantly more expensive and you're less likely to strike up conversation with ordinary Indians. Whatever class you decide to travel in, you will need to pop down to the train station and book yourself a ticket. I won't go into too much detail, but suffice to say, it's probably best to put half a day aside for this little errand. Ah, the many joys of India!

Bus

Travelling India by bus and coach can require an almost saintly forbearance and an extremely hard backside. Short journeys by bus are great (if a little hair-raising) but for longer distances I'd suggest you jump on a train or a plane. The journey from Leh to Manali will see you sat in a rickety old bus for 2 whole days negotiating some of the highest motorable passes in the world on roads that seem more suitable for mountain goats than mass transport. That being said it is a spectacular journey and it will leave you feeling that you have really travelled.

When travelling within a state, bus travel is fine. Buses serve all major cities and often stop off at small towns and villages (and at shops owned by friends of the driver) along the way. On long journeys you may well be charged around ten rupees for having your baggage stored inside the bus. Although this is a little cheeky and can be a little annoying (the charge seems to apply only to foreign travellers), it is important to remain polite and to remember that the baggage handlers on the buses have much less money than you do.

Many buses have a small shrine to their deity of choice perched precariously on the dashboard and often make stops at roadside temples to make offerings. If asked for a few rupees to help with the offering, my advice would be to dig deep and hand over a few coins; bus travel in India can be a dangerous business and it can't hurt to have a little divine protection!

Taxis, tuk-tuks and rickshaws

Travelling by tuk-tuks, cabs and rickshaws is a great way to travel around cities, although care must be taken. It is imperative that you agree on a price before you set off and don't be afraid to haggle: if your driver says the price is 100 rupees, knock them down to about 70 and you'll be getting a half decent foreigner-price. Travel by taxi is the most expensive, tuk-tuks are a little cheaper (but just as fast) and bicycle rickshaws are cheap and slow. Drivers will often try to take you to shops, hotels and restaurants where they receive a commission. Unless you really like the driver and don't mind being over-charged, it's best to refuse firmly but politely. When travelling in Mumbai, travel by taxi can be tricky. Taxi journeys are metered, but the meters are very out of date. Ensure that the meter is at zero when you start and make sure that the driver has an official tariff card in the car. When you arrive at your final destination, you'll need to work out the price by comparing the price on the meter with the tariff card. It's a pretty simple operation, but unscrupulous drivers often try to overcharge unsuspecting tourists and will insist that they don't know what the tariff card is. As with all things in India, be polite and remain calm.