



JANUARY 2025

**SOLD OUT!**

WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN  
THE WAITING LIST?

## India Design Tour

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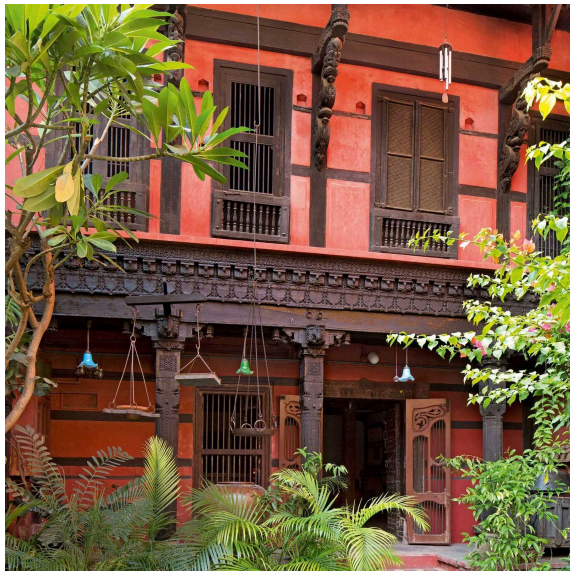
Architecture, gardens, history, textiles, crafts,  
leopards, palaces & awe-inspiring landscapes



## AT A GLANCE

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<b>Dates</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> to 19 <sup>th</sup> January, 2025 (15 days, 14 nights)
<b>Hotels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• House of MG, Ahmedabad</li><li>• Udai Bilas Palace, Dungarpur</li><li>• Taj Lake Palace, Udaipur</li><li>• Rawla Narlai</li><li>• RAAS Jodhpur</li><li>• RAAS Chhatrasagar</li><li>• Samode Haveli, Jaipur</li></ul>
<b>Meals</b>	Breakfasts daily (14), lunches (4), afternoon tea (1) and dinners (5)
<b>Transport</b>	Air-conditioned cars and mini coach for ground transport, jeeps for safaris and boats for pottering around on lakes, as per the itinerary
<b>Your Hosts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tour leader – landscape designer, Nicole Court (Sydney based)</li><li>• Co-host – textile designer, Kinny Sandhu (Delhi based)</li><li>• Tour manager/expert local guide</li></ul>
<b>Group size</b>	Typically a small group size of 10-14 guests (minimum 8)
<b>Pricing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AUD\$15,950 per person, twin share</li><li>• AUD\$4,500 single supplement</li></ul>
<b>Bookings</b>	A spot on this trip may be reserved with an AUD\$2,500 deposit (please refer to Tour Details on p 23 for details of the full payment schedule).
<b>Itinerary Highlights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staying in royal palaces and northern India’s most charming, and luxurious boutique hotels</li><li>• Visits to meet designers, makers, naturalists and local experts for an insider’s perspective into India</li><li>• Curated architecture, textile, craft and history-focused excursions that showcase our favourite experiences in Ahmedabad and Rajasthan</li><li>• Naturalist-led walks and safaris</li><li>• UNESCO World Heritage sites</li><li>• Calico Museum of Textiles in Ahmedabad (subject to availability)</li><li>• A hands-on block printing workshop</li><li>• Curated shopping experiences to visit some of India’s most interesting fashion and homewares retailers</li><li>• Special lunches in painted palaces, and dinners under the stars</li><li>• Post-tour trips to visit the Taj Mahal and Delhi (see pages 18-21)</li></ul>
<b>Best time of year to visit?</b>	January is the coolest time of year – sunny 22°C days and 8°C nights make for lovely travelling weather



AHMEDABAD

## YOUR HOSTS

**AN INSIDER'S EXPERIENCE** is assured by travelling with these two well-connected India experts: Nicole Court (Sydney-based) and Kinny Sandhu (India-based). Their combined knowledge, experience and list of personal contacts informed the choices they made when curating this tour: the most interesting people to meet and the most intriguing places to experience at each destination. These immersive experiences will tell the story of place and its people who reside here, so that you can sit back, relax and enjoy the magic of India.

### Nicole Court

Nicole is a landscape designer who has worked and travelled in India over the past 30 years. She created textile and homewares ranges for ten years for her business, Acorn Trading, which were hand crafted in India and stocked by Australia and New Zealand's best boutique retailers.

A deep love for combining traditional craft skills with a modern living led to a long collaboration with family friend, Kinny Sandhu. A constant inspiration was Kinny's unwavering practice of providing employment to local women, whilst working to the highest design and quality standards.

Nicole's ranges were featured in *Belle*, *Vogue Living*, *Vogue Entertaining*, *Gourmet Traveller*, *Home Beautiful*, *Inside Out*, *SMH*, *The Age*, *Australian House & Garden*, *Marie Claire* and *Elle*. She has been a contributing garden writer for *Landscape Outlook* and is an occasional guest speaker for the Landscape Design Institute, Mosman Garden Club and Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society. Nicole is passionate and knowledgeable about textiles, design, landscape and architecture, and has great Indian connections.

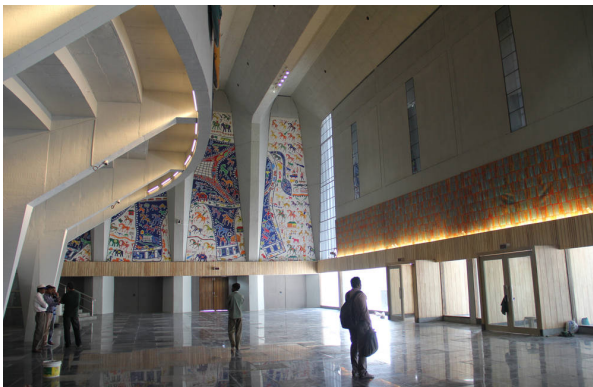
*Instagram: @nicolecourtdesign*

### Kinny Sandhu (née Majithia)

Is this India's most well-connected woman? A member of high society, she was born at the height of her philanthropic, entrepreneurial and cosmopolitan family's powers, then one of the wealthiest families in India – her family's estate even has its own steam engine. Kinny has wonderful family stories, such as the time when her father and uncle were the first to fly into Kathmandu, landing on the golf course in their plane – and the king of Nepal came out to greet them. Kinny's great-aunt is Amrita Sher-Gill, India's Frida Kahlo, and one of the greatest avant-garde women painters of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kinny's mother was a code breaker in the Australian Navy and met a dashing Indian Air Force officer in Melbourne during World War II when he was posted there as an attaché. Kinny straddles two worlds, with extensive family in both India and Australia.

Kinny is a designer and maker with a passion for India's hand crafts and the welfare of those in her local community. She has been producing hand-stitched textile ranges for local and international designers for 40 years. She runs a quilting and embroidery production unit on her farm, is an accomplished artist and is an indigo grower and natural dye producer. She and her husband split their time between their homes in Delhi, Nainital (in the foothills of the Himalayas) and their farm (about 4 hours east of Delhi).

*Instagram: @kinnysandhu @taraiblue*



MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE OF AHMEDABAD

**INDIA IS VIVID, EXCITING, AND OVERWHELMING**, with kaleidoscopic beauty in all directions. The very air is electric, multidimensional. Temple bells ring, pilgrims chant, car horns honk, and jasmine and roses and street food scent the air. Women in pink, red, indigo, or orange saris float past. Everything is on the move.

You are invited to join us on the India Design Tour – a “conscious luxury” exploration of the road less travelled in Ahmedabad and Rajasthan. We will show you our India, from a designer’s point of view. From the city of Ahmedabad, with its overlays of past empires; to adventures in the princely lands of India’s most picturesque state, Rajasthan; this is a trip to enchanted places conjured from childhood stories of exotic lands.

Through our extensive network of friends, family, and interesting contacts, we have organized special walks with local experts, visits to meet designers in their studios, and workshops with Indian craftspeople to bring to life the beating heart of this part of the world.

The pace of the trip allows for plenty of lingering over tea on the terrace, as well as hands-on experiences, so that we can slow down the pace and immerse ourselves in the moment – “doing” as well as “seeing”. From block-printing workshops, bird watching, a candlelit dinner in a stepwell under a starry desert sky, and many other surprises, we have allowed plenty of time at each destination so that we can immerse ourselves in the rhythm of each place.

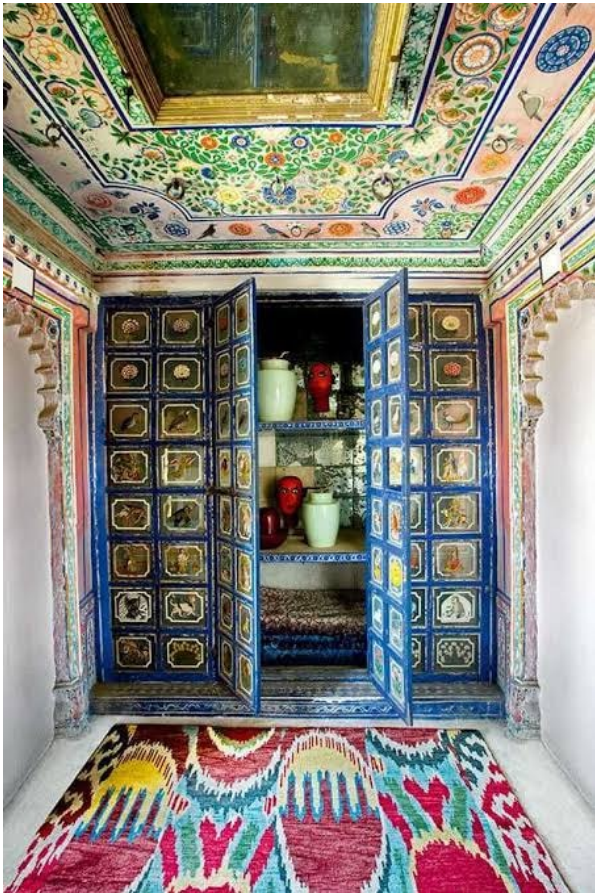
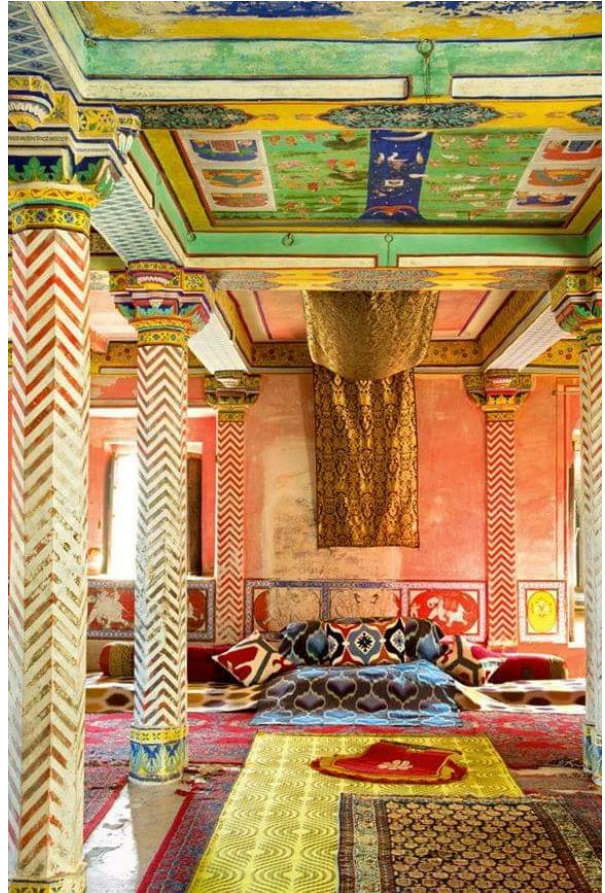
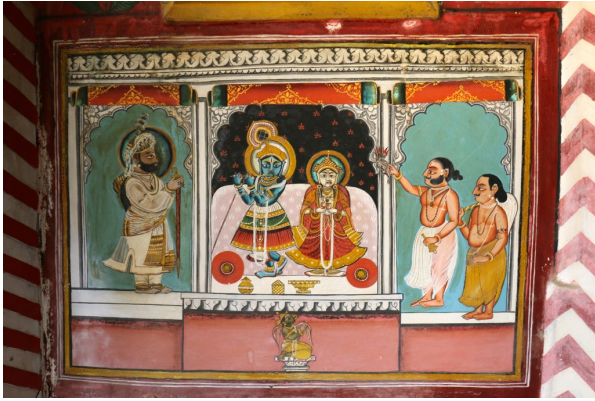
We will tour with typically 8-14 guests – small enough to tailor boutique experiences but large enough to get to know an interesting group of people.

You don't have to be a designer to come with us – if you are interested in gardens, architecture, textiles, craft, all things handmade, good food and beautiful hotels, this is an opportunity to travel with like-minded people who share your interests.

#### **\* CONSCIOUS LUXURY**

Each hotel has been chosen for its special magic, each one revealing its unique sense of place in a way that only exists in India. The hotels have been chosen mostly from a community of independent hoteliers and hospitality groups who define luxury by the following constants:

- Deliverable community impact including training and employing staff from the local community
- Conservation of nature and wildlife
- Preservation of built heritage
- Promotion of intangible heritage through local experiences
- Sensitive land use and efficient resource utilization
- Sustainable solutions and best practice
- Excellence in service, style and design



DUNGARPUR

## ITINERARY

### DAY 1 • Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> January

Upon arrival at Ahmedabad's Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport you will be met at the gate by our representative and escorted through passport control and customs and whisked off to the House of MG in a chauffeur-driven car (20 minutes). Check in is from 2 pm onwards.

**Accommodation:** *The House of MG (Modern Heritage Grand Room)*

#### *The House of MG*

Experience old-world charm at this delightfully rambling hotel, with its canopied beds and antiques. The city's premiere boutique hotel, the House of MG was the family mansion of textile baron, Mangaldas Girdhardas (MG) and is an Ahmedabad destination in its own right. Well-located, it is a short walk to the city's old quarter. The family's collections are displayed throughout the hotel, offering an interesting glimpse of the craft, art and textile heritage of Gujarat and there is an indoor swimming pool with a dreamy ceiling painted with lotus flowers.

### AHMEDABAD

The architecture of Ahmedabad ranges from the ancient to the very modern – from the splendid medieval monuments of the city's 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century heyday to the work of contemporary Indian architects, as well as the greats of Modern architecture, Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn. It is now one of the centres of cutting-edge contemporary design. It has a prominent university campus (the National Institute of Design – the most prestigious design school in India) as well as Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram on the riverbank (with its Charles Correa-designed museum). In addition, the historic walled city of Ahmedabad was the first city in India to be inscribed in UNESCO's World Heritage City list.

### DAY 2 • Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January

Meet your hosts, Nicky Court and Kinny Sandhu, and fellow guests this morning.

Today's private excursion will take you to unique places in this vibrant city based on our knowledge of architecture, history, gardens and artisans. Numerous examples of medieval architecture survive amid the bustling streets of the old quarter. In the city's 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century heyday, the ruling sultans recruited local Hindu craftsmen to decorate the impressive mosques, forts and palaces they erected in the capital, and the result was a hybrid Indo-Muslim style of architecture quite distinct from that of their Mughal rivals. After lunch we will explore the old city, including walking through the most charming 'pols' (traditional neighbourhoods). The earliest of the city's wooden haveli's date from the fifteenth century, and for many years, these were the homes of the city's rich merchants, who created immense wealth. The most profitable of their numerous business activities were based on cotton, textiles and particularly the indigo dye for which the city was famous. The exquisite mansions still stand, hidden in the labyrinth of the old city, their flamboyant displays of fine wood-carving surviving as an outward sign of the status, grandeur and discerning taste of their erstwhile owners.

Stepwells are an Indian water harvesting tradition from deep antiquity, imbued with sacred significance. A critical resource of water, which is collected during the rains for the dry months, these architectural delights also serve as an important leisure time community hub and sacred space for the local community. Richly symbolic, step wells were largely commissioned by the women of royal families to help make water collecting easier – traditionally done by women for their families. Some of the most exquisite examples of step wells are to be found in Rajasthan and Gujarat, such as the 15<sup>th</sup> century example, Dada Hari Ni Vav, that we will be visiting this afternoon.

**Accommodation:** *The House of MG (Modern Heritage Grand Room)* | *Meals included: Breakfast*





UDAIPUR

### Day 3 • Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025

This morning is all about Modernist architecture – buildings by Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, Charles Correa and B. V. Doshi, including a visit to his studio, Sangath (subject to availability). Architecture heaven!

This afternoon we will visit the Calico Museum (subject to availability). It is regarded as the finest museum of Indian textiles in the world. The galleries display an extraordinary collection of textiles spanning trade textiles from the 15th to the 19th centuries, textiles of the Mughal and provincial courts from the 17th to the 19th centuries, regional embroideries from different parts of India, beadwork from Gujarat, a variety of resist-dyed textiles, and Indian costumes. Note: Our visit to the Calico Museum cannot be confirmed until closer to our departure. In the event we are unable to visit, we will arrange alternative touring.

Afterwards, we will visit one of the few remaining families still practising the textile art of Mata Ni Pachedi, translating to ‘that which enshrines the Goddess’. These hand-painted or block-printed images on textiles, surrounded by stories from myths, epics and folk traditions, take more than a month to complete, and preserve the tradition of worship through art.

This evening, we will visit the night market that specialises in Gujarati textiles – think sparkling mirrors and eye-popping embroidery. Good natured bargaining is part of the fun here.

**Accommodation:** *The House of MG (Modern Heritage Grand Room) | Meals included: Breakfast*

## RAJASTHAN

A portion of the ancient Silk Routes once wound through here, and the effects of the cross-cultural exchange it seeded—in goods, art, craftsmanship, and ideas—ripple across the region to this day. Rajasthan is the ancestral home of the Rajputs – warrior clans who claim to originate from the sun, moon and fire. They have controlled this part of India for more than 1000 years. Rajasthan is India's archetypal land of maharajas and medieval forts, festivals, palaces, leopards and tigers. It is a land of sweeping sand dunes, camel trains and wild leopards, of glittering jewels, architectural wonders, glorious colour and vibrant culture. It is the must-see state of India, brimming with unforgettable people and landscapes.

### DAY 4 • Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January

After breakfast, we drive to Dungarpur in Rajasthan (2hrs 50 mins drive). We are staying at Udai Bilas Palace, owned by the Maharaja of Dungarpur.

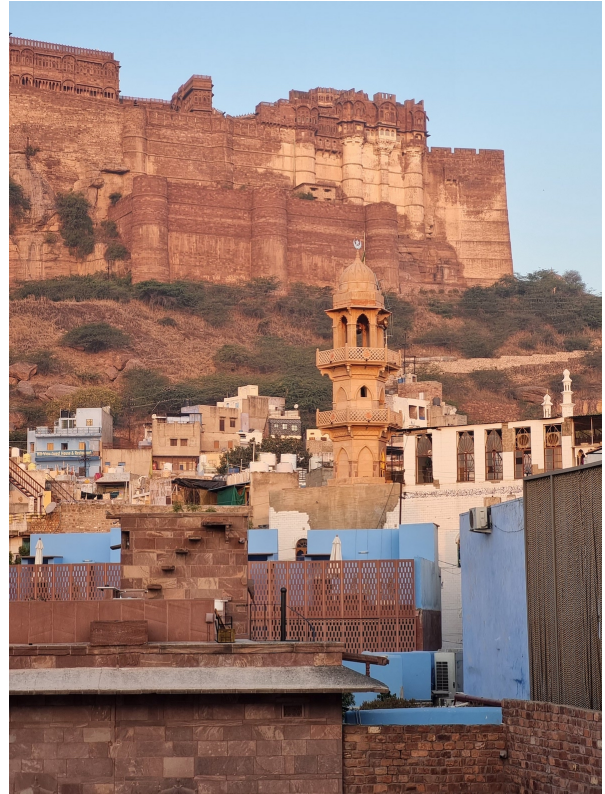
We will visit Juna Mahal, the family's former palace, which contains some of the finest mural-painted interiors in India. It has excellent frescoes, miniatures, glass and mirror inlay work. Juna Mahal's fortifications and extensive decorations are representative of early Rajput fort-palaces and show the ways in which the artistic design, architectural planning, and construction techniques of this building type evolved from the 13th to the 19th century.

This afternoon you can explore old town, a labyrinth of narrow streets lined with traditional shop-houses displaying fine plasterwork, or relax by the rather grand pool, with its views over the lake.

**Accommodation:** *Udai Vilas Palace (Suite Room) | Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch*

### *Udai Vilas Palace*

This whimsical 19th-century palace, owned by the Maharajah of Dungarpur, sits on a lake rich in birdlife in a town rarely visited by tourists. The original Art Deco wallpapers and furnishings have been lovingly conserved and the whole of this heritage property evokes the spirit of a bygone age, as does the Maharaja's collection of vintage cars.



JODHPUR BLUE

### **DAY 5 • Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January**

After breakfast, we drive to Udaipur (1hr 40mins drive). We will visit the beautifully decorated interiors of the City Palace this morning and then cross Lake Pichola to be royally welcomed under a shower of rose petals at the famous Lake Palace.

This afternoon you may choose to relax by the pool or come for a walk through the streets of the old city, which is only a few minutes away in a canopied palace boat. We can also take you to some of our favourite shops for block printed textiles.

We will finish the day with a private cruise on the lake at sunset.

**Accommodation:** *Taj Lake Palace (Palace Room Lake View) | Meals included: Breakfast*

#### *Taj Lake Palace*

The Taj Lake Palace in Udaipur is like something out of a fairy tale. Built in 1743 by the royal dynasty of Mewar, the Lake Palace had a starring role in the Bond film, Octopussy. The views are dreamy, the palace divine and the swimming pool is Insta-worthy.

### **DAY 6 • Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January**

After breakfast, we drive north (2hrs 30min drive) to Mountbatten Lodge for lunch, followed by a visit to the medieval Jain temples at Ranakpur, which are located in a remote and beautiful valley in the Aravalli Hills. Considered to be one of the finest examples of temple architecture in Rajasthan, it is the destination for one of the five major pilgrimages of Jainism, an Indian religion whose followers practise non-violence towards all living beings and believe that self-control is the key to liberation. Afterwards, we drive to Rawla Narlai (55 mins drive).

The landscape is rugged around Narlai and leopards can often be seen basking in the sun on the rocks. Later this afternoon, experience the thrill of exploring the countryside in jeeps for a sighting of this beautiful and graceful cat.

Tonight we have organised a rooftop dinner, under the stars, featuring local specialities.

**Accommodation:** *Rawla Narlai (Grand Heritage Room) | Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

#### *Rawla Narlai*

Rawla Narlai is a beautifully restored 17th-century royal retreat owned by the royal family of Jodhpur. There are a series of flower-filled courtyards and a lovely pool hidden in a walled garden. Set in a particularly scenic part of the Aravalli Hills, it is a great base for walking and leopard safaris.

### **DAY 7 • Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> January**

Rawla Narlai lies in the shadow of Elephant Hill, a massive granite monolith. Join us for an early morning walk – it is worth climbing the 700 steps to the top for a sunrise panorama over lakes, fields and forests that were once a private hunting reserve for the Maharajahs of Jodhpur.

After breakfast, enjoy a guided village walk to experience everyday life in this close-knit traditional community. There is time to enjoy the pool this afternoon, or to have a spa treatment (at an additional cost).

We have organised something very special for this evening – dinner in an ancient stepwell, lit by candlelight.

**Accommodation:** *Rawla Narlai (Grand Heritage Room) | Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **DAY 8 • Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> January**

We drive to Jodhpur (2 hrs 30 mins drive) today and arrive in time for lunch at Baradari at the fabulous RAAS Jodhpur.



RAAS CHHATRASAGAR

This afternoon, we will explore the narrow lanes of blue buildings in the walled old city below Mehrangarh Fort. Its winding streets are filled with residents going about their business, cows wandering, rickshaws motoring, open kitchens creating delicious smells, markets and shops beckoning to their customers. We will finish at the home of a local family of spice traders for masala chai and snacks at sunset.

**Accommodation:** *RAAS Jodhpur (Luxury Room) | Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Afternoon Tea*

### **RAAS Jodhpur**

A very cool conversion by Studio Lotus of an 18th-century haveli, located within the 500-year-old walled city. RAAS Jodhpur is the Blue City's most stylish hotel, offering impressive views of Mehrangarh Fort. A wonderful base for exploring the old city on foot, you can even slip through a secret passage from the hotel to reach the restored Toorji Ka Jhalra, a red sandstone stepwell built in the 1740s, and the chi-chi boutiques which have sprung up around it.

### **DAY 9 • Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January**

After breakfast, we will venture outside the city walls on a nature walk. Spread over 170 acres in the lee of Mehrangarh, Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park was established in 2006 by its restorer-creator, Pradip Krishen, under the patronage of the royal family of Jodhpur. It is a microcosm of the indigenous geological, botanical and faunal diversity of the Thar Desert. We will be accompanied by a naturalist from the park who will tell us about the soil, medicinal plants, geology and fauna found here, with the chance to spot local and migratory birds, as well as wild boar, reptiles, butterflies and dragonflies. There is a quality of wilderness and quietness here. It is one of Jodhpur's best kept secrets.

Then we visit the 15<sup>th</sup> century Mehrangarh Fort, entering through its massive doors, studded with spikes to deter attacking enemy elephants. The views from the top are stunning.

The rest of the afternoon is at leisure – you may like to enjoy the hotel's pool with its magnificent view to Mehrangarh Fort, have a massage or spa treatment (at an additional cost), visit the stepwell next door, or return to the lanes of the old city right outside the hotel for some shopping in the bazaar or one of the upmarket boutiques nearby.

Dinner is on the roof tonight – think cushioned banquettes and candle-lit tables at the in-house restaurant, Darikhana, with its magnificent fort views.

**Accommodation:** *RAAS Jodhpur (Luxury Room) | Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **DAY 10 • Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January**

After breakfast, we drive to RAAS Chhatrasagar (2 hrs 15 mins drive). An utterly peaceful retreat midway between the princely cities of Jodhpur and Jaipur, the camp sits on a dam with views over a nature reserve and farmland to the Aravalli Hills. It's a place of big skies and vast panoramas. We will explore the lake by boat this afternoon. There will also be time to laze by the pool or have an afternoon snooze. Going down to the lake at sunset, where the hotel sets up a temporary bar, is always fun. There are lots of opportunities to spot birds (binoculars are always on hand at RAAS Chhatrasagar) – last time we saw flamingos!

**Accommodation:** *RAAS Chhatrasagar (Luxury Tent) | Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch*

### **RAAS Chhatrasagar**

Created by the descendants of the area's former rulers, this was the sort of tented camp once set up here for visiting dignitaries on safari. Then RAAS commissioned Studio Lotus to design something very special here which has taken it to a whole new level. It is rated by *The Telegraph (UK)* as one of the top five places to stay in India.



JAIPUR

The luxury tents have wood block printed interiors (embroidered with local birds); the beds are oh-so-comfortable, and the spotless bathrooms have walk-in showers, a bath with lake views, fluffy towels and homemade soaps. The shaded porches with wooden deckchairs with views over the lake are perfect for an afternoon snooze.

### **DAY 11 • Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January**

We start the day with a guided nature walk, focusing on birdlife (over 250 species have been recorded here).

Later we will have a cooking demonstration by our wonderful in-house chefs and also visit the nearby village to see the potter, who still hand throws on a manual wheel in the traditional way. Finish the day by relaxing around a blazing fire under a canopy of stars, before settling into a culinary feast for dinner.

**Accommodation:** *RAAS Chattrasagar (Luxury Tent) | Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **DAY 12 • Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> January**

After breakfast, we drive to Jaipur (4 hrs 30 mins drive). This afternoon, we will go up into the hills above Jaipur to visit Nahargarh Fort. Highlights include the inspired colour palette of its interiors and its spectacular views over Jaipur, especially at sunset.

Eighteenth century engineering genius and a clever rainwater harvesting system managed to convert the quarry, from which the fort's stone was excavated, into one of India's most unusual stepwells. Afterwards, we can walk down the hill to the City Palace (25 minutes walk) or you can travel down in our mini coach to join those who chose to walk (35 mins drive).

**Accommodation:** *Samode Haveli (Haveli Suite) | Meals included: Breakfast*

#### *Samode Haveli*

An urban oasis in the old city, Samode Haveli is a royal mansion, set in a lovely garden with apartments arranged around a series of intimate courtyards. Built over 200 years ago as the ancestral home of the aristocratic Samode family, it is still occupied by their descendants, who have converted their home into a charming luxury hotel. Ascend the elephant ramp and enter a leafy courtyard, with interconnecting waterways. It has original 18th-century hand-painted murals, and Jaipur's most inviting pool.

### **JAIPUR, THE PINK CITY**

Founded in 1727 by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II as India's first planned city. Jaipur was always intended as a place for commerce to flourish, where leathersmiths, weavers, furniture builders, and jewellers created custom pieces for wealthy merchants who passed through town on their way to other outposts in the Mughal empire. Today, the city remains a site of pilgrimage for anyone even vaguely interested in shopping – artisanry is a fact of daily life here. At the city's heart, the City Palace continues to house the former royal family; and, in the arid hill country surrounding the city, is the fairy-tale grandeur of Amber Fort.

### **DAY 13 • Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> January**

Water percolates through every aspect of Rajasthani life, including its mythology, science, architecture, art, and culture. This morning, we have organised a special curated experience at our favourite fortress palace, Amber Fort. We will listen to the beautiful stories hidden in the fort – stories of people, stories of water and stories of life as it evolved in the desert – and learn about the history, unique architecture, traditions and the life of the people living inside the palace, as well as in Amber, the town below. Eight doors will be unlocked, providing access to the hidden parts of this UNESCO World Heritage-listed site, revealing the ancient yet sophisticated water systems of the fort. They are still functioning, and include underground





VILLA PALLADIO

tanks, a Persian wheel and water lifting structures. We will then return to the more renowned palace areas, illuminated by a new understanding.

Afterwards, we will learn the basics of block printing at the lovely Anokhi Museum of Handprinting – a small textile museum, housed in a restored 400 year old building nearby. During this beginner-friendly class, we will block print a design onto a cloth square.

Then we are off for lunch at Villa Palladio (at an additional cost). Designed by Barbara Miolini and Marie-Anne Oudejans, this boutique hotel opened in late 2022 and took the design world by storm, making it onto *Conde Nast Traveler's* 'Best New Hotel's in the World' Hotlist for 2023, and the cover of *World of Interiors*, as well as features in *Architectural Digest*, *Frankie*, *House & Garden UK* and *Elle Decoration*.

Hand-painted surfaces are the star here, and walls, pillars and niches all sport intricate murals, and a sea of red-and-white stripes – channelling both Mughal, Moorish and Italian aesthetics, as well as the block prints that Rajasthan is known for. The grounds have been landscaped in the style of a Mughal garden with strict geometries and central, rose petal water fountains.

On our way back into town we have a few options – we can tailor our choice to the group's interests. We can visit a Mughal garden, call in to a pottery studio specialising in hand painted plates that is giving ancient illustrations a modern Indian spin, take in Charles Correa's Jawahar Kala Kendra, or we can continue on to Bar Palladio, the blue and white predecessor of Villa Palladio, for cocktails (at an additional cost). If it is all too much, we will retire to our beautiful hotel – it has a rooftop bar with beautiful views over the city.

**Accommodation:** *Samode Haveli (Haveli Suite) | Meals included: Breakfast*

#### **DAY 14 • Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January**

We start with an early morning walk to visit the flower market and see the milk auction in full swing. We will be back at the hotel in time for breakfast, visiting the Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds) on the way back, in the calm of early morning.

After breakfast, we will visit the Jaipur royal family's Princess Diya Kumari Foundation in the Badal Mahal (Cloud Palace) within the City Palace complex where underprivileged women and girls are taught to sew – preserving traditional Rajasthani techniques as well as learning an income-generating skill. Lunch is at the Studio Lotus-designed Baradari at the City Palace (at an additional cost).

Then this afternoon we will take you to our favourite shops in Jaipur – think jewels, block prints, fashion and pashminas.

Enjoy a farewell dinner under the banyan tree at our hotel to celebrate and reflect on our travels before we say goodbye.

**Accommodation:** *Samode Haveli (Haveli Suite) | Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner*

#### **DAY 15 • Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January**

Enjoy a leisurely morning before we check out of the hotel by 12 noon, which concludes our tour.

You will be transferred to the airport in an air-conditioned car for your departure flight to connect with your international flight home.

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

## POST-TOUR EXTENSION: OPTION 1 THE TAJ MAHAL

### AT A GLANCE:

- Visit the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort with an expert guide
- Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> January – Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> January (2 days, 1 night)
- Jaipur – Agra – Delhi
- AUD\$2,100 per person, twin share
- AUD\$900 single supplement
- Post-Tour Extension inclusions: accommodation, meals, touring, activities and admissions, as indicated on the itinerary below, as well as air-conditioned ground transport with expert driver, tips and gratuities, and airport transfer
- Minimum of 6 guests (revised pricing will be offered if there are less than 6 guests)

### DAY 14 • Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January

For those you who would like to visit the Taj Mahal under the care of the same tour manager who has been travelling with the group for the past two weeks (he is also an expert guide):

After breakfast, drive from Samode Haveli in Jaipur to the beautiful Oberoi Amarvilas in Agra (4 hrs 30 mins drive). There is time to relax, have a swim or enjoy the nine acres of gardens, overlooking the Taj Mahal.

You will visit the Taj Mahal at sunset. Built by Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in childbirth, it has perfect proportions and exquisite details. One of the seven modern wonders of the world, it is a symbol of eternal love.

**Accommodation:** *Oberoi Amarvilas (Premier Room)* | **Meals included:** *Breakfast, Lunch*

### *Oberoi Amarvilas*

Inspired by Mughal design, every room has a view of the Taj Mahal, which is only 600 m away. Enjoy maharaja-level service and exploring the grounds – including a stepped water garden with a stunning swimming pool at its centre. This multi award winning hotel featured on the 2022 *Conde Nast Traveler* Gold List.

### DAY 15 • Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January

After breakfast, you will visit Lal Quila (Agra Fort). This walled city is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the finest Mughal forts in India.

We recommend having lunch at the hotel before the drive from Agra to Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi (4 hrs drive) for your departure flight home.

**Meals:** *Breakfast*



TAJ MAHAL

## POST-TOUR EXTENSION: OPTION 2 THE TAJ MAHAL AND DELHI

### AT A GLANCE:

- The Taj Mahal and Agra Fort plus our favourite Delhi experiences with an expert guide
- Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> January – Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> January (3 days, 2 nights)
- Jaipur – Agra – Delhi
- AUD\$2,800 per person, twin share
- AUD\$1,200 single supplement
- Post-Tour Extension inclusions: accommodation, meals, touring, activities and admissions, as indicated on the itinerary below, as well as air-conditioned ground transport with expert driver, tips and gratuities, and airport transfer
- Minimum of 6 guests (revised pricing will be offered if there are less than 6 guests)

### DAY 14 • Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January

For those you who would like to visit the Taj Mahal under the care of the same tour manager/expert local guide who has been travelling with the group for the past two weeks:

After breakfast, drive from Samode Haveli in Jaipur to the beautiful Oberoi Amarvilas in Agra (4 hrs 30 mins drive). There is time to relax, have a swim or enjoy the nine acres of gardens, overlooking the Taj Mahal.

You will visit the Taj Mahal at sunset. Built by Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in childbirth, it has perfect proportions and exquisite details. One of the seven modern wonders of the world, it is a symbol of eternal love.

**Accommodation:** *Oberoi Amarvilas (Premier Room)* | *Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch*

#### *Oberoi Amarvilas*

Inspired by Mughal design, every room has a view of the Taj Mahal, which is only 600 m away. Enjoy maharaja-level service and exploring the grounds – including a stepped water garden with a stunning swimming pool at its centre. This multi award winning hotel featured on the 2022 *Conde Nast Traveler* Gold List.

### DAY 15 • Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January

After breakfast, you will visit Lal Quila (Agra Fort). This walled city is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the finest Mughal forts in India.

We recommend having lunch at the hotel before the drive from the Oberoi Amarvilas in Agra to The Imperial Hotel in New Delhi (3 hrs 30 min drive). Evening at leisure to enjoy the hotel.

**Accommodation:** *The Imperial Hotel (Heritage Room)* | *Meals included: Breakfast*

#### *The Imperial*

Staying at this grande dame is an immersion in nostalgic, old-fashioned elegance – think gardens, verandas, vintage rattan furniture, wheeling fans and art. This oasis of calm is the most delightful hotel in Delhi and is owned by Kinny's sister's family.

### DAY 15 • Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January

Delhi is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, with a history dating back to 1000BC. Today's private excursion will take you to unique places in this vibrant city based on our knowledge of architecture, history and gardens.

You will spend the morning exploring Old Delhi, hopping on and off a convoy of red bicycle rickshaws. Built as a walled city named Shahjahanabad, it remained the capital of Mughal India until its fall in 1857, when the British Empire took over as paramount power in the Indian subcontinent. There are still glimpses of the mansions of nobles and members of the royal court, along with elegant mosques and temples, if you know where to look.

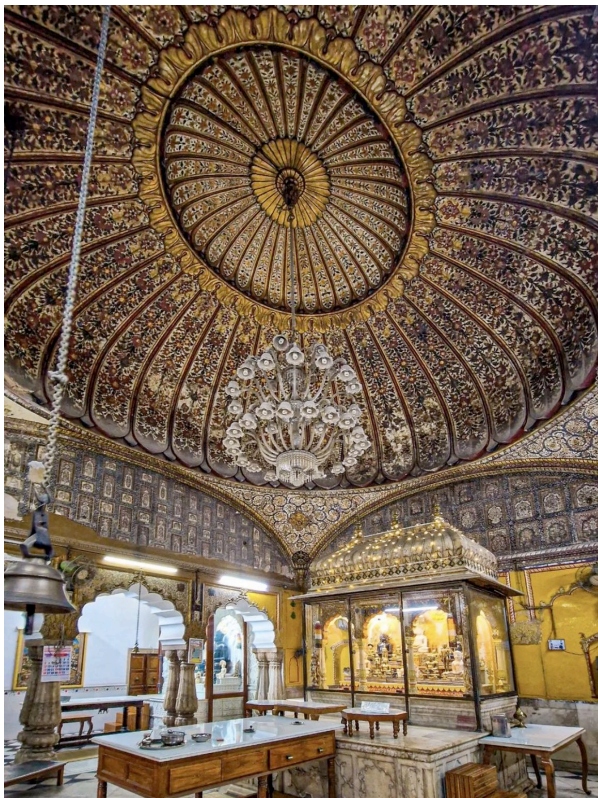
Highlights include the 17<sup>th</sup> century Jama Masjid (Friday Mosque) and a 250 year old Jain temple with an original interior like a Faberge egg (which is probably one of the best preserved Mughal interior in the world). And to round out these experiences of some of the many religions that co-exist in India, the morning will begin with a visit to a Sikh temple— its volunteers prepare and serve tens of thousands of meals each day to anyone who wants or needs one. It is so inspiring to see this communal effort in action. This will be followed by a traditional Mughlai lunch in a lovingly restored haveli, which was awarded a UNESCO award for cultural and heritage restoration. Its rooftop has wonderful views over Old Delhi.

After lunch, you will visit Humayun's Tomb, the architectural predecessor of the Taj Mahal. This World Heritage site has the first Persian garden that was built in India.

Afterwards you will be transferred to the airport for your departure flight home (this option will work for those of you with flights departing after 9.30 pm).

If your preferred airline's flight home has a morning or afternoon departure time, please get in touch for a quote for an extra night at The Imperial Hotel.

**Meals:** *Breakfast, Lunch*



DELHI – ONE OF THE OLDEST CONTINUOUSLY HABITATED CITIES IN THE WORLD

## TOUR DETAILS

### How to Book

- Please email Nicky Court to request a booking form:

[nicky.le.court@gmail.com](mailto:nicky.le.court@gmail.com)

- Deposits – to secure your booking, the following is required:
  - (a) AUD\$2,500 non-refundable deposit per person, at the time of booking;
  - (b) a further payment to a total of 50% of your tour/s cost per person is due 180 days prior to departure (9<sup>th</sup> July, 2024); and
  - (c) full and final payment for your tour is due 120 days prior to departure (7<sup>th</sup> September, 2024).
- Your payment schedule will be itemised on your invoice
- Full payment is required at the time of booking for reservations made less than 120 days before departure of trip. If Nicole Court Interior and Landscape Design Pty Ltd is unable to confirm your reservation, all deposit monies received by us will be refunded to you.

### Tour Dates

- India Design Tour: Ahmedabad and Rajasthan: January 5-19, 2025 (15 days, 14 nights)
- Post-Tour Extensions (optional):
  - Option 1: The Taj Mahal, January 19-20, 2025 (2 days, 1 night)
  - Option 2: The Taj Mahal and Delhi, January 19-21, 2025 (3 days, 2 nights)

### Tour Inclusions

- 14 nights hotel accommodation, as indicated in the itinerary
- Meals and beverages, as indicated in the itinerary
- Ground transport in air-conditioned coach and cars, with expert drivers
- Complimentary amenities in the vehicle such as bottled water and snacks
- Guided touring, activities and admissions, as indicated in the itinerary
- Airport arrival and departure transfers, as indicated in the itinerary
- Expert guides and drivers, including your tour leader Nicole Court and co-host Kinny Sandu; as well as the tour manager/guide who will be travelling with us; and 24/7 on ground support
- Tips and gratuities

### Tour Exclusions

- International airfares
- Meals not specified on the itinerary
- Alcoholic beverages
- Visa fees
- Health and travel insurance
- Medical emergencies
- Expenses for re-routing due to voluntary or unforeseeable reasons
- Personal expenses for drinks, snacks, telephone calls, laundry, internet (most hotels have free Wi-Fi)
- Video camera fees at museums and monuments

### Cancellation terms

- If you wish to cancel your booking, you must provide notice in writing (an email is sufficient)
- Cancellations made over 180 days prior to the tour start date will incur loss of deposit
- Cancellations made 179 to 120 days prior to the tour start date will incur a cancellation fee of 50% of the tour price
- Cancellations made 119 to 0 days prior to the tour start date will incur a cancellation fee of 100% of the tour price



- A minimum number of 8 bookings are required by 7<sup>th</sup> September 2024 for the tour to proceed. If the tour fails to satisfy minimum numbers, the tour may be cancelled or re-costed, we will give you notice on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024. If the tour is re-costed, you will have the option to either accept the new cost or to cancel your booking. You must make this election within 14 days of receiving notice from us. If the tour is cancelled or if you cancel your booking in these circumstances, we will at your election refund all payments made or credit payments towards alternative arrangements within 5 business days.

We will not be responsible for any other travel arrangements affected by, or any additional costs incurred, as a result of cancellation in these circumstances.

### **Booking Terms and Conditions**

Please refer to “India Design Tour January 2025 Booking Form with Terms and Conditions” for our full terms and conditions.

### **Medical**

On-call doctors are available at every hotel

### **Dietary requirements**

Please let us know if you any special dietary requirements when you book and we will confirm if we are able to accommodate them on the Design Tour – we will if we can!

### **Flexibility about minor changes**

So much thought and care has gone into the itinerary of this Design Tour but India always requires some flexibility in regards to minor changes. Any minor changes to the itinerary (eg, an activity occurring on a different day to the dated itinerary) will only ever be made because it improves the flow of the experience. Hopefully this doesn't happen, but if anywhere is unexpectedly closed due to unforeseen events, we will make sure that we do something else equally interesting.

## TESTIMONIALS

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**I HAVE NOW DONE TWO TOURS WITH NICKY.** Two unforgettable, wow every single day, in fact, often multiple times a day, wow! moments. It was evident from the moment I landed in Delhi, warmly greeted, walked through the airport, onto a waiting bus and into the comfort of the first of many beautiful hotels. All the way through to the moment I flew out again, filled to the brim with awe and delight.

Every single detail of the tour was thoughtfully curated. Nicky is a natural curator. Her attention to detail. Her love of all things India. Her passion for authentic human experiences all shine through with grace and love. Yes, love. I feel spoilt by my two incredible tours through India with Nicky. I'm not sure there is any other way to do it now!

**Sally, Sydney (January 2024)**

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**NICOLE COURT'S DESIGN TOUR WAS A LUXURY TRAVEL EXPERIENCE THAT CANNOT BE MATCHED.** Travelling with my sister, for my 50th birthday present, this tour was a complete success for me; the places we travelled to, the experiences that were curated and timed perfectly to build up our understanding of this complex and wonderful and diverse culture and place. I experienced utter beauty and fulfillment in many forms, be it the world class hotels, food or seamlessly planned activities.

Mostly it was a wonderful human experience, feeling safe and totally cared for, allowed me to confidently explore this foreign country, supported and connected to both Nicky, Kinny and Deep our guides, and finding new connections with a fantastic tour group that have ensured I have some wonderful new friends for life. I cannot recommend Nicole Court's Design Tours highly enough.

**Jacqui Williams, Perth (January 2024)**

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**THE METICULOUS PLANNING OF THE DESIGN TOUR TO INDIA,** the attention to detail, lovely surprises along the way, and our extremely knowledgeable guides all made this experience incredibly enlightening, where history, creativity and spirituality entwined, an unforgettable adventure for anyone passionate about design, textiles and architecture.

Spice scents, tiles, saris, hand-painted walls, incense, etched glass, hand-blocked prints, and temple bells have left an indelible mark on my soul. I feel completely spoilt and privileged to have been. It far exceeded all my expectations. I would go again in a heartbeat with Nicole, Kinny and the team. Highly recommended. A huge thank you. Heart open.

**Suzanne Maher, Bellingen NSW (January 2024)**

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**I'VE BEEN TO NORTH INDIA TWICE BEFORE,** but doing a tour with Nicky Court on her Design Tour is by FAR the best way to see India. You see the best of the best along with the chaos, but knowing you are safe and well taken care of. Just sit back and trust! There was something wonderful in every day along with pleasant surprises. We saw the most unique places, beautiful palaces, tombs, and ruins along with how the masses live on the streets, compatibly with cows, dogs, elephants, camels, donkeys, goats, sheep, bicycles, rickshaws, tuktuks, motor bikes, cars, buses, and trucks. The two most challenging components are the air and water quality but that faded as we basked in the glow of all that was so wonderful!!

**MJ, Sydney (January 2024)**

**I'VE RECENTLY RETURNED FROM INDIA** and was fortunate enough to be part of Nicky Court's Design Tour. As I was travelling alone, I did have some reservations about how I would manage, never having been to India before and being a little nervous in unfamiliar places. Fortunately, everything was taken care of with thoughtfulness and care. From the moment I alighted the plane until the moment I boarded to return home everything was looked after. The detail of what we did down to where the next clean bathroom would be, were all taken care of. I enjoyed hearing about the history of beautiful buildings. We experienced delicious meals in beautiful locations, from a Mughal-inspired garden to a step well, lit with hundreds of candles. The timing of our glamping in the beautiful wilderness park was impeccable. After a week of taking in so much history, culture and horns beeping it was lovely to enjoy the solitude and see the stars. Nicky and Kinny are both kind and gracious women whose care for others made the trip what it was. Their humbleness and willingness to help with any issue made everything seamless and stress free for the guests. Their knowledge and cultural insight was fantastic and we were well informed throughout the trip, much has stayed with me as I've settled back into life at home. Thank you for everything, I would highly recommend any trip to India that Nicky would organise.

**Carla M, Sydney (January 2024)**

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**MY TRIP TO INDIA** with Nicole Court and her co-host Kinny Sandhu was just magical. Their knowledge and care and kindness for us all was outstanding. I have been to India many times but never like this. A small group of like-minded travellers, some were travelling to India for the first time. Everything was organised so it was hassle free. At times India can overwhelm but there was a great mix of excursions and relaxation. We stayed in luxury small hotels and palaces which were divine. I cannot recommend this trip highly enough or India. India's people, culture, customs are intoxicating and with Nicole and Kinny you are immersed fully. Thank you so much.

**Denise Wright, Melbourne (January 2023)**

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**NICOLE'S INTRICATE DETAILED ITINERARY** allowed us the privilege of experiencing unique insights into the personal lives of those connected to art and culture. Traversing through the backstreets, inhaling the flower market scenes, witnessing artisans at work... Nicole certainly gets the balance right: exploring and seeing the essence of each place, as well as having some peaceful times in nature. Nicole and Kinny, and her "on-ground" experienced network gave us a sense of inclusiveness and fine hospitality. Indeed, trust is the word to have as one's mantra, allowing the serendipitous adventure to unfold.

**Jane Grossberg, Sydney (January 2023)**

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**NICKY TOOK US ALL ON A MAGIC CARPET RIDE** through Calcutta and India's North-East on her Design Tour. I have been to India many times, and I have been on a lot of group tours – this was one of the best I have experienced. Kinny and Nicky were great hosts and showed us things we would never have discovered ourselves, in a less travelled part of India.

**Susan B, Sydney (January 2023)**

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**TRAVELLING WITH 'DIETARY REQUIREMENTS'** was not a problem with Nicky as our leader. She ensured that all our accommodation chefs were warned in advance and I never ever had an upset stomach. This is a small example of the attention to detail and care Nicky takes in planning her tours. Not to mention the wonderful places and people we saw, and accommodation we stayed in. I highly recommend Nicky's Design Tour.

**Karen Robinson, Sydney (January 2023)**