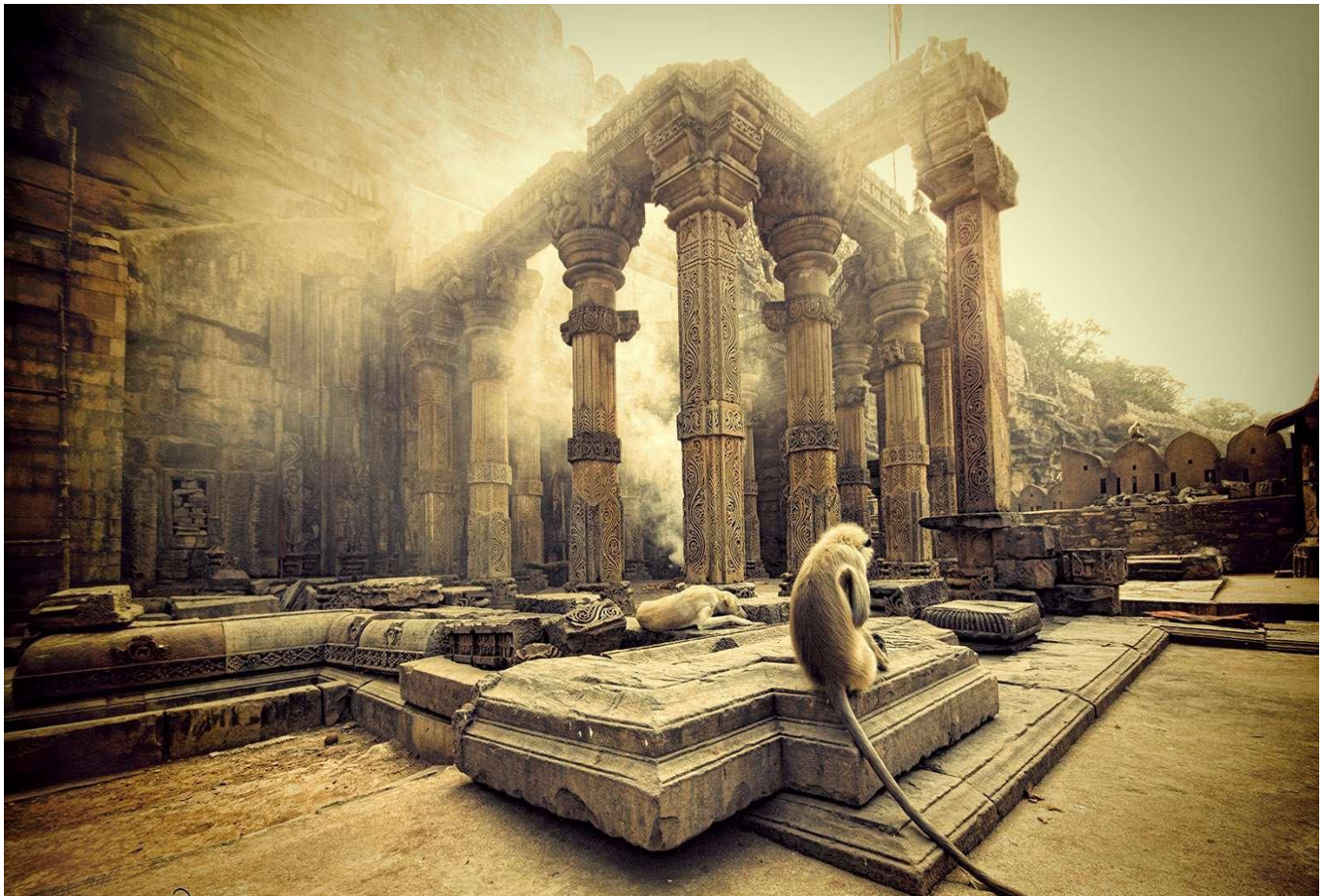


KAAFILA CENTRAL INDIA CULTURE & WILDERNESS.....



Vast, remote, rugged and stunningly beautiful; with an incredible array of virtually unknown historic sites and cities, untouched wilderness and unexplored national parks and a breathtaking variety of landscapes peopled by a host of colourful tribes and communities, CENTRAL INDIA is the ultimate destination for those who cherish the joy of exclusive discovery and exploration in this over-crowded world. This is Kaafila country par excellence!

Central India, encompassed almost entirely by the states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhatisgarh, has perhaps more incredible surprises for the traveler than any of the other better known regions of India. Strategically important as the gateway to the south, this vast region with its lush valleys, fertile plateaus and rugged forest covered hills remains for most travelers Terra Incognita. For various reasons Central India, known as India's Tigerland due to the multiplicity of famous tiger reserves remains shrouded from the tourist gaze. Given the manner in which so much of Indian tourism has developed this is perhaps a blessing!

The superb Kaafila mobile camp allows a select few – those who have a yen to break free of the rutted paths and explore the secret places of the Earth away from the crowds – to access these incredible remains in considerable luxury and in the company of genuinely knowledgeable and enthusiastic guides.

Kalinjar

The once invincible fort of Kalinjar where the Great God (Mahadeva) Shiva conquered death and defined Time. It is a vast mountain eyrie brooding romantically over a lush tranquil plain with a small town crouched at its feet. And in its ruined splendour you will find some of the most magnificent and evocative architecture and sculpture anywhere of a quality that beggars the more mundane offerings of travel brochures. The campsite here is set at the edge of the Panna Tiger Reserve buffer zone and offers some superb nature hikes, fishing, cycling and photography opportunities in the idyllic little villages that dot the landscape.

Kalinjar dates back to over 2000 years and is mentioned in some of the most ancient Hindu literature – more as a wild and remote location for meditating ascetics. At some point it's commanding location above one of the major trade routes between the Ganga Valley and the south was recognised and the fort became one of the one of the most powerful in Central India. A succession of dynasty's ruled here until it finally passed into the hands of the Chandela's sometime in the 8th Century. The Chandela's were great patrons of religion and architecture and embellished the fort with a wealth of temples, palaces and magnificent sculpture, much of it stolen but enough remaining to make Kalinjar one of the most important sites for pre-Muslim Indian art. And it was here that the great Imperial pretender Sher Shah Suri who had seized northern India from the grasp of the second Mughal Emperor Humayun, was killed in an accident when besieging the fort – thus allowing the Mughals to return. Kalinjar occupies a flat-topped spur 900 feet above the plains and occupies an area of almost 130 Ha. Since the 16th century, the fort passed from Mughal to Bundela and then British hands in the wars of the early 19th century. It is much overgrown by jungle with charming ruins entwined by strangler figs spread untidily (but rather romantically) across the plateau.

From its battlements one looks out over a lovely tranquil valley punctuated by hamlets and mango orchards with the surrounding hills covered in forest and skies patrolled by Long-billed and white-rumped vultures and other raptors including Bonelli's eagles. Here one can explore in complete peace with only a few locals venturing to the fort for a picnic or a visit to the superb Shiva temple of Neelkanth Mahadeva. There are many notable remains including a stunning statue of Manduk Bhairava located in

a remote corner of the fort where one is likely to encounter only the occasional archaeological survey guard armed with a spear as defence against the many bears here! Access to Kalinjar is by road or a paved footpath.

ITINERARY....

18 DEC / SUN

ARRIVE DELHI

(Meal Aloft)

On your arrival at international airport in Delhi and after clearing customs & immigration, our representative will greet you and transfer to the hotel (**booked on own**).

Delhi, the capital of kingdoms and empires is now a sprawling metropolis with a fascinating blend of the past and the present. It is a perfect introduction to the composite culture of an ancient land.

Some time to relax and recover from jetlag.

After breakfast, this morning we invite you to join our expert guide on an exploration trip to Delhi. Unlike a regular sightseeing tour, this trip offers you an opportunity to experience the soul of Delhi with its noises, smells, tastes.

As A City Wakes Up: 0900 hrs: Hop onto Delhi's most popular 'Time-machine' ...and get transported to the times of the grandeur and subsequent ruin of the Mughal empire. Colourful, vibrant, noisy and chaotic are words that best describe what many call Old Delhi,



the 7th city of Delhi, which was built by the mighty Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. A traditional breakfast (complimentary) begins your day, after which we visit India's second largest & most

aesthetically designed Mosque, the Jama Masjid. Then we walk through streets and markets of this 17th century imperial capital city of the Mughal empire where once royalty descended...where you savour the fragrances of the boisterous Spice Markets, one of Asia's largest and be dazzled by the glitter of India's largest Jewellery markets and get a glimpse of the once-glorious Havelis(Royal Mansions) of Old Delhi. With a mix of walking and rickshaw rides you discover hidden gems while exploring the narrow alleys and 350-yr old markets of the city built at the acme of Mughal Empire, India's most glorious monarchy.

Delhi Origins: We leave behind the 7th city and zoom across the city, seemingly further back into time too, using the metro to reach the first city/settlements when the beginning of this great city took place in 8th Century AD, at Mehrauli. The most unique thing about Mehrauli is that it has been able to sustain itself for over 1200 years and more, without any of the multiple empires ever abandoning it! This medieval village, considered as one of oldest continuously existing settlements in the world, has seen numerous kings and emperors and conquerors enjoy her charm from the early native Rajputs of the 8th Century to the Turks of the 12th Century to the later British conquerors of 19th Century, who have undeniably, all left their mark on Mehrauli. Our walk will begin under leafy trees in the wild jungle-like environs of Mehrauli as we tell you tales of Delhi's humble origins. You notice the beginnings of Islamic architectural influences merging into native Hindu architecture with a visit to the beautiful ruins of 13th century tombs and a magnificent Mosque. You visit the Baolis (multi-storey subterranean step-wells) to know what was a 'refreshing' experience in the Delhi heat many centuries ago. We wind up this pre-lunch session with a quick visit to one of the three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Qutub Minar.

Stay overnight at Delhi.

Suggested Hotel

The Imperial, New Delhi: One of the most iconic hotels in Asia, the Imperial was built in the 1930's



as part of Lutyen's New Delhi. Immaculately maintained it showcases Delhi's imperial past and oozes the elegance of the colonial era. Along jasmine scented corridors of calm you will find wonderful antiques and pieces of art including an impressive collection of paintings dating back to the 17th century. 233 beautifully furnished rooms and suites have excellent amenities though some only have a view of the atrium. The swimming pool and spa are perfect for unwinding in between sightseeing or recovering from jet-lag after a long flight. High tea on the lawn or the colonnaded veranda is considered by some to be among the essential experiences of Delhi but make sure you leave room for dinner in the award winning Spice Route restaurant.

19 DEC / MON DELHI-KHAJURAHO- KALINJAR CAMP (B, D)

After breakfast transfer to airport to board flight for Khajuraho.

9W-2423 (Jet Airways)

Delhi/Khajuraho

1050/1335 hrs

Meet upon arrival and taken to visit the Khajuraho temples. The temples are built mostly of a fine sand stone from Panna and Ajaigarh, though a few were built of granite. The temples here are compact and tall, raised on a high platform, with an ambulatory path around them with no enclosure wall. The Khajuraho Temples represent one of the finest surviving examples of the splendid architecture and exuberant and fine sculpture of the period immediately prior to the arrival of the Turko-Afghans in the North. The superb detail, grace and beauty of the figures and the frankly sensuous and even erotic nature of the densely packed bas-relief friezes along the exteriors of the temples and their platforms provides a fascinating window into the life and times, fashions and foibles of aristocratic Hindu India around the 10th and 11th centuries AD. Life was clearly lived to the full and this vast complex of temples, of which only a handful survives bears witness to the wealth that even a relatively obscure kingdom of central India commanded. Deservedly these temples, surrounded by gardens, have been declared as World Heritage Monuments. We continue our journey to the Kaafila campsite. The drive is lovely. The first part takes you through farmlands flanked by the Vindhya hills to the sparkling Ken River with the densely forested hills of the Panna Tiger Reserve climbing away from the river. You drive through the reserve, the road switch-backing past some spectacular view points to the town of Panna – once famous for its emerald and diamond mines. The town of Panna was also the capital of the eponymous princely state and is known for its collection of fine temples including a remarkable oddity – the temple of Baldeoji which is a scaled down model of St. Paul's in London is worth a stop while passing through Panna. Once through Panna, the road once again enters dense jungle dropping in tight loops to the lush valley sheltering amidst the forested shoulders of the Panna Tiger Reserve buffer zone. As you drop down into the valley, fields of wheat and mustard stretching away in swatches of vivid green and yellow to the edge of the slopes you are transported suddenly into the remote and timeless world of the old India – stunningly beautiful, serene and completely unique. This is the India that Kaafila has been set up to access. The campsite lies beyond a tiny hamlet, across a small stream patrolled by four species of kingfishers, small cormorants, egrets and herons. It is an idyllic spot that backs

on to the forested hills. Time permitting you can do a short walk before returning for sundowners, bath and dinner.

The campsite is about an hour from one of India's greatest hill forts – Kalinjar

Stay overnight at **Kaafila Luxury camp**.

Kaafila Central India Culture & Wilderness

The superb Kaafila mobile camp allows a select few – those who have a yen to break free of the rutted paths and explore the secret places of the Earth away from the crowds – to access these incredible remains in considerable luxury and in the company of genuinely knowledgeable and enthusiastic guides. This holiday ventures to the untouched heart of Central India. Kaafila offers sustainable camping in the most picturesque locations imaginable. Access this Old India with your own caravan. The luxurious tents and expert guides of Kaafila allow you a glimpse of an India that has elsewhere been submerged by the globalizing anonymity of the 21st century.

20 DEC / TUE

KALINJAR CAMP

(B, L, D)

Kalinjar -Once considered the most strategically important fort in Central India – and indeed the gateway to India's rich and rugged heartland – Kalinjar is dramatically set on the top of a vast curving escarpment of the northern Vindhyan Range. Its history is lost in time for well before it became a bastion of power, this was the abode of ascetics drawn to its powerful brooding and isolated location, cut off from the world by tiger haunted jungle. Kalinjar's settled history can definitely be traced to the time of the Imperial Gupta's of the 4th Century AD as evidenced by the wealth of fine Gupta period sculpture – much of it abandoned in careless neglect amongst the cyclopean ruins of the temples and palaces that cover the vast area of the fort. As dynasty succeeded dynasty, Hindus, Muslims, Delhi Sultans, Mughal Emperors and Bundela Rajputs, Kalinjar became enriched with layer upon layer of new construction – temples, mosques, shrines and palaces embellished with water tanks and springs. What is remarkable is that even the iconoclastic Muslim invaders perhaps influenced by the sheer artistic virtuosity of the sculpture and architecture, refrained from damaging Kalinjar's incredible heritage. And yet this fort today stands isolated, forgotten and decaying picturesquely in its jungle fastness. The Hindu religious artefacts pertain primarily to the God Shiva in all his various guises. Here you will see one of the most beautiful pieces of Indian sculpture anywhere – the head of Shiva serene and intensely spiritual. It is said that the name Kalinjar means where 'Shiva conquered Death and defined Time'. But the fort itself appears condemned to neglect. Ironically it is this very neglect that provides us with a fascinating and quiet day of exploration amongst the ruins; of stunning scenery, photography and walking. Picnic lunch will be provided in a quiet lovely corner of the fort. Return to camp by sundown.

Stay overnight at Kaafila Luxury camp.

21 DEC / WED KALINJAR CAMP (B, L, D)

We depart camp post breakfast driving back towards Panna we visit couple of ancient temple along the way, we will stop at the interesting 'Scottish' mansion that belongs to Rani Divya Singh and her husband Raja Keshav Pratap Singh. Divya is a scion of the ruling family of Panna and Keshav is a descendant of one of the land- owning aristocracy. Here we will have lunch with these charming and interesting people with their insights of the history of the region as well as the present since both of them are deeply involved in local politics. Since the campsite is located at the edge of the buffer forests of Panna Tiger Reserve, you have the opportunity of some wonderful walks through the jungles. The birding is wonderful in the winter with several winter migrants – including several species of warblers and flycatchers and waders along the streams and water bodies. Bonelli's eagles, crested serpent eagles, open billed storks are just a few of the interesting species you can see here. While it is unlikely that you will see any large mammals – this is leopard country and occasionally even tigers venture into these areas. If nothing else, you will see much sign. Return to camp by sundown.

Stay overnight at Kaafila Luxury camp.

22 DEC / THU KALINJAR CAMP (B, L, D)

Today is a day of exploration with options to head out on foot, car or cycle. We also visit the fort of Ajaigarh – another atmospheric and fascinating hill fort – is located even closer than Kalinjar and offers a wonderful and invigorating morning walk rewarded with some fine views and beautiful old temples and sculpture. The idyllic little villages with their friendly and colourful inhabitants are a treasure trove for photographers.

Stay overnight at Kaafila Luxury camp.

23 DEC / FRI KALINJAR CAMP - BANDHAVGARH (B, L, D)

After breakfast drive to Bandhavgarh (4-5 hrs), on arrival check in to lodge.

Bandhavgarh National Park: Set amongst The Vindhya Hills in Madhya Pradesh, Bandhavgarh consists of 168 sq miles of Sal & a mixed forest of bamboo, grassland, and a complex of deciduous forests. Declared as a national park in 1968 the Bandhavgarh National Park is spread across the area of 105 km². The name Bandhavgarh has been derived from the most prominent hillock of the area of Umaria. The area of Bandhavgarh is being flourished with a large biodiversity, the place which is also being famed to grip highest density of tiger population in India. There are at least 150 species of birds in the park, along with other

mammals such as Tigers, Sloth Bear, Langur Monkeys, Wild Boar, Mongoose, 3 Kinds Of Deer - Chital, Sambar And Barking, to name a few.

Lunch and afternoon Jungle safari by 4x4 open jeep.

Note: Kindly note that as per the new Forest Department regulations, Evening Safari drives will not be conducted in any National Park at Madhya Pradesh on Wednesdays.

Stay overnight at Bandhavgarh.

Samode Safari Lodge: *Samode Safari Lodge is located in the heart of tiger country, adjacent to Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, this gorgeous lodge is the creation of the Samode family (the first to offer boutique heritage hotels in Jaipur, Rajasthan) and was inspired by their safaris in Africa. Beautifully designed and sustainably managed the lodge reflects the style of local village architecture while oozing warmth and luxury.*

The main lodge is raised on a platform with a huge exposed wooden ceiling, fantastic wildlife photography and art work dotted all over the walls and an insightful collection of books on Indian wildlife, history and culture. Meals are taken in the adjoining dining area or can be served in your villa or beneath the trees for a private bush dinner. At the centre of the property is a swimming pool and spa.



The 12 elegant villas are light and spacious with both air-conditioning and heating, distinct bedroom and living spaces, fabulous indoor and outdoor bathroom areas with stylised paintings of wildlife, and a sliding picture window leading on to a private veranda. Every 'mod con' is there for those who want them but they are discreetly hidden away for those who don't.

Best of all, aside from its many creature comforts, Samode Safari Lodge offers great service and knowledgeable, enthusiastic naturalists who will accompany you on safari in Bandhavgarh.

24 DEC / SAT

BANDHAVGARH

(B, L, D)

Early morning wake-up call with a knock on your room door and Tea/Coffee.

You will wake up to misty mornings and sounds of birds calling, which will make an exciting start to your day. As soon as dawn breaks, leave for your Jungle Safari, accompanied by a



resident naturalist and forest park guides in 4x4 Jeeps.

Then continue with our resident naturalist and the forest guide to explore the rest of the National Park for the day by your 4 x 4 exclusive jeep. Around lunch time you have your second break for the day to again freshen up and stretch your legs. Balance of the afternoon you continue driving through the vast expanse of the Park spotting birds and other animals while enjoying the rich flora and fauna that surrounds you.

