



# RIDE WORLD WIDE

## INDIA 2011 - 2012

### Ride Information Sheet

These rides take place in Rajasthan, west of Delhi, a geographically varied area comprising the Thar Desert, the Aravalli mountains and large areas of semi-desert scrub. It is historically one of India's richest regions and you will ride through the former kingdoms of Marwar, the capital of which was Jodhpur, and Mewar, the capital of which was Udaipur. Both Kingdoms were governed by Rajput rulers of separate clans and their descendants are a proud and colourful race. The region is dotted with ancient Forts and magnificent Palaces that were the private homes of the royal princes. Many are now used as hotels and are unique, wonderful places to stay. The rides are organised by Raghuvendra Singh, known as 'Bonnie', an ex-Indian army officer and now one of India's top breeders of Marwari horses as well as an accomplished polo player. His family home, Dundlod Fort, is the starting point for most trips and Bonnie is a charming, knowledgeable and thoughtful guide. Together with his business partner, Arun deo Sanger, who skilfully arranges the back up and logistics, Bonnie and his staff will show you the whole spectrum of life in Rajasthan. From the peasant farmers who eke out a living in the dusty scrub and desert, the simple, traditional subsistence villages you ride past, to the splendid, privileged life of the royal princes whose historic homes open their doors to you. All in all, an unbeatable way to experience this part of India.

**Dates** Rides are arranged from October to late March with set date rides of 10 to 18 nights offered and tailor-made trips (for 2 or more) possible on request. Please see the set ride dates overleaf and call us to discuss your plans and availability. We can also arrange optional extensions to add to any ride itinerary - for example a visit to Agra to see the Taj Mahal, to Khajerao in Madhya Pradesh to see the famous Jain temples or to one of India's wildlife reserves such as Bhandavagar or Ranthambore to search for tigers. Further afield, you might like to visit Goa or the southern state of Kerala where there are hotels and spas specialising in Ayurvedic treatments as well as lovely beaches.



**The Horses** The horses used are mainly pure-bred native Marwari horses (an elegant, spirited breed with lovely 'bell' shaped ears) or Kathiawari horses, with some Thoroughbred crosses. Bonnie has bred many of the horses himself and some are used for endurance competitions, tent pegging and polo. Most are between 15hh and 16hh. They are slight, athletic and generally narrower in build and quite a bit thinner than horses in the west. They are a forward going and responsive ride, also sensitive yet brave and calm and most are trained to neck rein like polo ponies. Military saddles (based on an English style but with a short leg panel) are used and saddle-bags are provided where necessary.

**Riding** Most itineraries offered are a combination of riding and sightseeing as there is so much to see in this part of India. The number of days riding on each trip varies with the route and the individual itinerary, but on average there is usually 4 to 6 hours riding on each riding day, with a break every now and then to stretch your legs or if the terrain requires, for lunch and sightseeing. The daily riding itinerary varies with the route and time of year - you may set off early and ride for the whole morning, arriving at the accommodation chosen for that night at about lunchtime, leaving the afternoon free to explore local villages, enjoy your hotel or visit local temples and fortresses. Alternatively, you may set off slightly later and have a long break in the middle of the day for lunch and a siesta in the countryside, riding on later in the afternoon. Rides are lead by Bonnie himself, by Bhuneshwar, his younger cousin, or by one of their English speaking colleagues (eg the 2nd half of the Pushkar Fair Ride is lead by a guide trained by Bonnie and now based at Rohet). A local back-up rider also rides with you and grooms follow by jeep to attend the horses during the ride, at night and at lunch stops. Bonnie's assistant, Sunayana (who manages Dundlod and the camps) often follows with the back up whilst Arun or his assistant travels ahead to hotels to ensure everything runs smoothly. The combination of Bonnie's wonderful horses and horsemanship, the insiders' knowledge and connections within the country that both he and Arun have and their thorough understanding of the expectations of overseas visitors, means you are in the best possible hands to see this part of Rajasthan. Group size depends on the trip, but groups are limited to a maximum of 12 or 14 guests. There is a rider weight limit of approximately 95kg (15 stone) but please contact us if you are close to this to ensure suitable horses are available. Some heavier riders may also be taken by prior arrangement - please contact us to discuss.

**Pace** The riding pace varies with the terrain and itinerary chosen, but the rides are usually at a well balanced, moderate pace overall with plenty of good opportunities for fast canters on sandy going. As is the army habit in India, most of the riding is at a walk or canter (the horses seldom trot), with many of the horses used to moving directly from walk into canter. The pace on tailor-made rides can be varied to suit.



**Riding Experience** These rides are aimed at reasonably experienced, confident riders. To take part you should be comfortable, balanced and secure in the saddle and able to control a well-schooled horse in open country at a walk, trot and fast canter. Marwari horses are naturally a fairly spirited, sensitive breed (like a small English Thoroughbred) and participants should be confident riders, used to riding different, forward going horses outside, through varied terrain and environments. You will also enjoy your trip much more if you are fairly riding fit - some rides include quite long hours in the saddle and long, fast canters as a group over varied terrain. If you do not ride regularly at home, we recommend concentrated practice in the months before you go to accustom yourself to the hours spent in the saddle.

**The Terrain** The rides take you through the open, sandy, desert-like scrub of Marwar and into Mewar, which is full of hills and lakes. Between the two, runs the thickly forested Kumbalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, where you may see game such as Black Buck, Chinkara deer and Nilgai antelope, the largest of India's antelope. The terrain you cross is generally excellent for riding - largely flat with sandy tracks bordered by sand dunes, rough scrub, acacia and Khejri trees. You will also ride through rural farmland (again largely on flat, sandy going) where crops of millet, wheat and chick-peas are grown by local farmers who work the land with cattle and camels. Early in the season, before the crops are harvested, you will ride along the dirt and sand tracks and around the fields; after the Diwali festival in early November, when the crops have been harvested, there is more scope to cut across ploughed fields. On all rides you will pass through small villages, settlements and larger towns, on dirt or tarmac roads, watching local people as they carry on with their everyday lives. You also ride past monuments and temples, see local women and children collecting water at village wells and men and women working in the fields. The local people especially the children, are very friendly and love to watch the horses pass.

**Accommodation** Accommodation on the rides is in a combination of Palace hotels, ancient Forts and 'Havelis' (merchants houses) that have been converted to hotels, in other good quality and comfortable hotels, or in private tented camps set up for you by staff. Many of the Palace hotels are superb and renowned for their unique setting, imposing architecture and wonderful (though often faded) grandeur. Udaipur's Shiv Niwas and floating Lake Palace Hotel are probably the best known, but Rajasthan is full of lesser known, charming and often intricately built forts, castles and palaces, many of which are privately owned and are now used as hotels by their owners. Most rides start with a night at Dundlod Fort, Bonnie's family home, and an imposing building dating back to the 1700s. Although the Fort itself is now rather dilapidated and run down, it is an interesting place to stay giving a real insight into how the old Indian families used to live. It has a large central grass courtyard, to the back of which is an attractive pillared reception area, decorated with frescos and colourful carpets. There is a good sized dining room and another attractive, walled courtyard, hung with colourful banners, that is often used as an atmospheric outside dining hall. Winding staircases lead through thick walls to the various guest bedrooms, all of which are different. Bedrooms are simple although adequate, each with its own small bathroom with flush loo and simple shower (a pipe with shower attachment on the wall, open to the room (not enclosed in a separate shower unit) with water draining along the tiled floor). Beds are fairly narrow / small with traditional mattresses – these seem thin and hard at first but generally give a good nights sleep! Bedrooms at the other smaller hotels used are also often simple, in similar style, but hotels are carefully chosen and all are different, perhaps with a particular highlight such as a beautiful building, setting or wonderfully personalised atmosphere. Although plumbing and décor may be tired, there is generally something special to make up for this. Some of the bigger hotels are very luxurious and newly renovated, with magnificent reception and dining halls, swimming pools and gardens and several offer extras such as Ayurvedic massages and spa treatments. All hotel rooms have private bathroom with loo and shower or bath. Hot / running water and electricity is reliable in most, although bear in mind that services and supplies in rural India are not as reliable or sophisticated as in the west and occasionally supplies may be limited or interrupted. When camps are set up, large, round, walk in tents are used with comfortable camp beds, bed-side tables and fold up chairs or stools provided. There is a separate portable shower and loo unit(s) shared between guests and sometimes the camp is set up in the ramparts of an ancient fort or building so there will be a good water supply and flush loos nearby. Rates assume twin-shared accommodation but single rooms / tents are usually possible at a supplement. If you are travelling alone you will need to book a single room (and pay the supplement) unless you are prepared to share with another guest AND we definitely have someone to share with you.



**Meals** The food on the rides is good and great care is taken in its preparation. Meals are a combination of local and European food, with spicy local dishes toned down to suit western palates. The day may start with a breakfast of cereal or porridge, toast and eggs if you wish, served with tea, coffee or fruit juice. Lunch, is often a hot buffet-style picnic that is served whilst you are out riding, with a choice of local dishes such as soup, rice and various curries, samosas, chappatis and lentil dahl. It is generally served from a table, then eaten seated on small fold-up chairs set around a large picnic mat. Dinner, again often buffet style, gives you a chance to taste some of the more elaborate specialities of the region and is either eaten at your hotel, or when camping, at a long table or around a camp fire. Bottled mineral water is included in the trip rate (one bottle per person per day) and further supplies as well as beer, wine and a selection of soft drinks can be bought for an extra charge. Although Indian wine is not the best and is quite expensive, the local beers are excellent!

**Weather** The rides take place during winter and spring months. December and January are winter and days are usually sunny and, except in windy weather, warm enough for shirtsleeves with average daytime temperatures in the 20's C (between 70 and 80 degrees F). It can be cold at night however, particularly in the desert, with temperatures sometimes dropping to freezing. This is the dry season but there can still be a slight chance of rain. March is the start of spring and hot weather usually sets in towards the end of March / April.

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**Weather cont.** In early March days are warm to hot, although you may need a light pullover at night. October is usually quite hot (daytime temperatures in the 30's C) with temperatures starting to cool down in the latter part of the month. November is generally very pleasant.

**What to bring** We will send you a list of things we suggest you bring when you make your booking.

**Example Itineraries, dates and rates** Various itineraries are offered from set dates and tailor-made rides can be arranged on request to suit. Please see the further details and example itineraries set out overleaf (if itineraries are not attached please ask us as some are on separate sheets).

**Set date rides and rates for 2011 / 2012:**

**Please note** that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in US\$. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the US\$/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.

### **1) Pushkar Fair Ride**

A ride to coincide with the famous Pushkar Camel Fair, which takes place each year in Pushkar in October or November. The trip includes a two day visit to the Fair, a wonderful opportunity to experience one of Rajasthan's unique and immensely colourful traditional festivals first hand. You will then ride on to the edge of the Aravalli Hills and the magnificent Kumbhalgarh Fort before visiting Udaipur.

#### **Pushkar Fair 2011 Dates**

**Whole Ride - 26th October to 13th November (18 nights)**

**First half only - 26th October to 5th November (10 nights)**

**Second half only - 1st / 2nd to 13th November (11 / 12 nights)**

**Note: Re Pushkar Fair Ride** - Please note that on current flight schedules, riders will be returned to Delhi on the evening of the last day, so onward flights should be for late that night or after.

#### **Rates:**

Whole Ride US\$6415 per person (single room supplement US\$1835)

First half only US\$3795 per person (single room supplement US\$1170)

Second half only, 11 nights US\$4350 per person (single room supplement US\$1145)

Second half only, 12 nights US\$4520 per person (single room supplement US\$1330)

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**Rates & dates cont.****2) Christmas Ride**

Spend Christmas and New Year's Eve in style! Beginning at Dundlod Fort, a ride through the Shekhawati and Marwar regions with Christmas at Nawalgargh and New Year's Eve at Roopangarh Fort.

**2011 Dates - 21st December 2011 to 3rd January 2012**

**Rate:** US\$4430 per person (single room supplement US\$1165)

**3) Nagaur Camel Fair Ride**

A ride to co-incide with the Camel Fair which takes place in Nagaur, north east of Jodhpur, in late January / February each year. Less well known outside India than the Pushkar Fair and hence a little less touristed, the Nagaur Fair is a fascinating, colourful and typically Indian event to witness.

After riding the itinerary includes several days sightseeing and visits to Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Jaipur, three of Rajasthan best known cities. (Please note that riders will be returned to Delhi for departing flights in the evening of the last day so onward flights should be for late night on the final day or early the next morning).

**2011 Dates - 1st to 16th February** (15 nights)

**Rate:** US\$4645 per person (single room supplement US\$990)

**2012 Dates - 20th January to 4th February** (15 nights)

**Rate:** US\$4730 per person (single room supplement US\$1010)

**NOTE:** Rates quoted above for these set departure rides assume a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 14 riders. They are based on twin accommodation and **INCLUDE** all riding, meals except in cities (Delhi, Jodhpur, Jaipur, Agra and Udaipur), mineral water when riding (one bottle a day), sightseeing, some monument entrances (not in Delhi) and the services of an English speaking guide. They **EXCLUDE** international flights to Delhi and taxes, meals (other than breakfast) in the cities (Delhi / Jaipur / Udaipur / Agra / Jodhpur), personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), any camera fees, visa fees and items of personal nature such as tips, laundry, extra drinks etc.

**See detailed itineraries further on**

**4) Tailormade and Private rides**

We can arrange private or tailor-made rides on request. Rides with itineraries similar to the Christmas / Pushkar Fair and Shekhawati Heritage Rides are an option between October and March from dates to suit (subject to hotel, guide and horse availability). Please call to discuss and for rates. Rides can normally be arranged for 2 or more riders - rates depend on the number of riders taking part and the hotels used as there is generally some flexibility. As a guide, for a 10 night trip riding in the Shekhawati region and with a visit to the Taj Mahal, the rate will be around US\$3000 to US\$3500 per person depending on numbers. Please call for further details.

Week long (7 night) rides staying throughout at Dundlod Fort are another option for 2 or more guests from dates to suit. The rate for these depends on the riding you wish to do. Please call for further details. As a guide, for 7 nights with daily hacking around Dundlod and twin accommodation, the rate will be approximately US\$1500 per person assuming a minimum of 2 people and excluding transfers from / to Delhi. Instruction in polo and in the traditional Indian sport of tent pegging are also offered (extra charge - please call to confirm)

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**Flight and Travel information:** The meeting point for all rides is Delhi. There are direct flights from London to Delhi with British Airways, Virgin, Kingfisher and Jet Airways. Rates vary with the season and airline but expect to pay between £550 and £750 per person for an economy return. **We would be happy to give you a flight inclusive quote for your holiday and to book flights for you - please call us if you would like further information on flights or a quote. (Our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213)**

**General visa and health information** (NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking)

**Visas** British Passport holders require a visa to visit India and you will need to arrange this in advance. The Indian High Commission now out-sources visa applications to VF Services (UK) Limited and online applications take about a week to process plus postal time. We will send more visa information and an application form on receipt of your booking form.

**Health** No inoculations are legally required for India if travelling from Europe but you are recommended to ensure you are up to date with inoculations against Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid and Hepatitis A. Inoculations against Cholera, Diphtheria, Japanese Encephalitis and Rabies may also be recommended in some cases. Although parts of India are high risk for Malaria, most of Rajasthan is rated low risk by the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London. You may still be advised to take anti-Malaria tablets however and should consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice.



**Example Itineraries** The following are examples of the itineraries planned for the various set date rides - although **please note** that these are only examples of what is planned / available and the day by day arrangements and hotels used may be varied by your guides at their discretion if the weather or other local conditions require. Please contact us for individual ride itineraries if not set out below

### **Pushkar Fair Ride - Example Itinerary**

This trip includes a chance to visit the Pushkar Camel Fair, one of Rajasthan's most colourful and vibrant cultural festivals where for centuries desert tribesmen have gathered to trade camels, horses and cattle, living in a tented city and accompanied by a lively bazaar with magicians, dancers, musicians, storytellers and hawkers. You also ride through rural India visiting traditional local villages which few tourists see, spend a day in the famous 'Pink City' of Jaipur, a day in Udaipur with its wonderful lake and floating hotel and see many of the magnificent forts and palaces in the area. Nights are spent in luxurious hotels, camps, converted castles and palaces, with a few nights at the Fair in a comfortable tented camp or in comfortable thatched cottages close by. The following is an example of the itinerary planned:

**Day 1** - Your own arrangements to arrive in New Delhi. Met on arrival and transferred to the 5\* Imperial Hotel or similar for the night. Own arrangements for meals.

**Day 2** - Collected from the hotel at about 09.00 and driven to Dundlod Fort (about 5 to 6 hours). Dundlod Fort is in the heart of the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan on the edge of a town of the same name. The original fort was built in 1750 and part of the old building, which is a mix of Mogul and Rajputana architecture, is now used for guests. Although now rather dilapidated, it is an interesting place to stay, giving a real insight into how the old Indian families used to live. There may be time in the late afternoon to walk or drive to the stables to meet the horses before dinner and the night at Dundlod Fort. (B,L, D)

**Day 3** - A short drive to the stables to meet the horses, which you will try out today with a ride in and around Dundlod town, passing through farmland, various houses, monuments and temples. Return to the Fort for lunch and in the late afternoon ride out again if you wish. The terrain around this semi-desert area is soft and sandy and ideal for getting used to the horses with plenty of opportunities for some good canthers if you wish. Dinner and night at Dundlod Fort. (B,L,D)



**Day 4** - A moving day, riding to Mandawa (about 22 kms). The route passes through villages and farmland dotted with Khejri trees and the terrain, which is quite flat except for the occasional sand dune, is excellent for riding. Arrive Mandawa and ride to the imposing Mandawa Castle, a large fort built in 1755, now carefully restored and converted to a comfortable hotel with large swimming pool and well tended gardens. Like many of the area's historic buildings, Mandawa Castle is a curious mixture of old and new and its medieval turreted towers and palanquin-roofed balconies, blend with modern comfort in old world rooms. Dinner and night Mandawa Castle. (B,L,D)

**Day 5** - Ride on to Nawalgargh (about 25 kms). The Shekhawati region, of which Dundlod, Mandawa and Nawalgargh are a part, is Rajasthan's 'open air Art Gallery' and no other region in India - or perhaps the world - has such a large concentration of high quality frescoes. The town of Nawalgargh was founded in 1737 A.D. It exudes an old charm with its colourful market and has the largest number of painted Havelies (merchant's houses) in the Shekhawati region. Wandering along the noisy, bustling streets you look up to see houses beautifully decorated with frescoes depicting the whole gamut of social and religious life; paintings that show history with humour. Overnight at the Grand Haveli hotel, Nawalgargh. (B,L,D)

**Day 6** - Ride on to Bhairon Ji Temple (about 32 kms) passing several villages and rural farmers dwellings. The landscape changes dramatically as you ride and takes you close to the great Aravali range of hills. After lunch, ride on through farmland, then follow a dry river bed running parallel to the Aravali Hills. The night in a comfortable tented camp set up close to a small temple. (B,L,D)

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**Day 7** - Breakfast and a half day ride (about 18kms) to the small village of Bajore. Lunch, then leave the horses and drive about 2 hours to Samode Bagh (Palace). The night camping at Samode in a luxurious semi-permanent tented camp in which you will re-live the splendour of a bygone age! Sand coloured tents are lined with fabric printed in typical Rajasthani design and have draped muslin ceilings, carpeted floors, electric lights, their own bathrooms with hot and cold running water, a private dressing room and porch. In the evening a gala dinner in the Palace, which is set in 20 acres of beautiful walled gardens with a 200 foot long row of fountains fed by a natural spring. (B,L,D)  
[NOTE riders doing the second half of the ride, 12 nights, will be met on arrival in Delhi from an morning flight and driven to Samode Bagh today] (D)

**Day 8** - An early breakfast then drive from Samode to the famous Amber Fort just outside Jaipur (about 1 ½ hours drive). Time to visit the fort, riding up to the entrance on an elephant, then drive on about 20 minutes to Jaipur, the famous 'Pink City'. Lunch at your hotel (the Hotel Raj Palace or similar) and the afternoon for guided sightseeing and shopping. You will be able to visit Jaipur's Palace of the Winds and the wonderful City Palace museum. Own arrangements for dinner and the night at the Hotel Raj Palace or similar. [NOTE riders doing the second half of the ride, 11 nights, take an early morning flight from Delhi and join in Jaipur today] (B)

**Day 9** - The morning to relax or for shopping. Own arrangements for an early lunch then a drive of about 3 hours from Jaipur to Pushkar, site of the Camel Fair. Transfer to the Pushkar Resort, a luxurious resort which is like an oasis in the desert. (B, D)

**Day 10** - The day free to explore the Fair where hundreds of desert tradesmen meet to trade camels, horses and cattle. There are also races, magicians, musicians and many lively stalls. Second night Pushkar Resort. (B,L,D)

**Day 11** - EITHER [If doing the first half of the ride only, DEPART driving back to Jaipur to take an internal flight back to Delhi] OR [If doing the full ride or second half only, DRIVE to Rohet (about 5 hours) by mini-bus and transfer to the Hotel Rohetgarh, a 16th C castle belonging to the former ruler of Rohet and now a very comfortable country hotel with landscaped gardens complete with wild peacocks, a beautiful swimming pool with pavilions where musicians perform in the evening, courtyards, a lake and temple. Dinner and overnight at Rohet. (B) or (B,L,D)



**Day 12** - The day to try the new horses you will use for the second half of the ride, riding around Rohet. Ride to the nearby villages, inhabited by farmers and the Bishnoi people, perhaps also seeing wildlife such as Blackbuck, Nilgai antelope and Chinkara Gazelle as well as the many birds that settle on the Lake, an oasis amid the sandy Marwar country. Second night in Rohet. (B,L,D)

**Day 13** - An early breakfast then ride on to Sadar Samand (about 26kms) arriving for lunch. Sadar Samand Palace is a lovely property that used to belong to the Maharajah of Jodhpur. It faces a large lake and is a wonderful place to relax. Overnight Sadar Samand Lake Resort. (B,L,D)

**Day 14** - Today you ride to Sodawas, about 46 kms (approx 7 hours riding), passing through several smaller villages which give a wonderful sense of rural India. Dinner and the night in an elegantly furnished house belonging to a relative of the royal family of Jodhpur, near the village of Sodawas. (B,L,D)

**Day 15** - A day which shows ancient India at its most picturesque. A ride of about 40kms (approx 6 hours riding) taking you through open country with scrub, past a few small villages, to Kotri, a larger village on the side of a hill with caves and temples. The night is spent here at Rawla Kotri, the very comfortable home of the local chief. (B,L,D)

**Day 16** - A ride of about 26kms (4 to 5 hours) to Ranakpur on the edge of the Aravalli Hills, the highest in India after the Himalayas. The night is spent at the Maharani Bagh Orchard Retreat hotel, a lovely property built by the Maharaja of Jodhpur where accommodation is in cottages set in an orchard. You will arrive for lunch and have time in the afternoon to visit the 14th Century Jain temple at Ranakpur, a beautiful and intricate building with an exotic atmosphere that pervades the whole area. (B,L,D)

**Day 17** - Ride from Ranakpur to the fortress of Kumbhalgarh situated at about 3,000 feet on top of a hill in rugged hill country (about 20 kms). The route passes through the wildlife sanctuary of Kumbhalgarh home to leopard, wild boar, Sambhar Deer and Four Horned Antelope. Parts of the sanctuary are heavily forested and you will follow an ancient camel and horse track that is closed to vehicles. Overnight in the Aodhi hotel in Kumbhalgarh, a lovely hotel belonging to the Maharana of Udaipur with swimming pool and uninterrupted views of the surrounding countryside. (B,L,D)



**Day 18** - A leisurely breakfast, then set off on the drive to Udaipur (about 3 hours / 80kms). The afternoon for shopping and sightseeing in this lovely city and a boat ride on Lake Pichola. Own arrangements for lunch and dinner. The night in the splendid, luxurious Shiv Niwas Palace Hotel (one of the best palace hotels in India) which overlooks the lake or the next best available hotel. (B)

**Day 19** - Transfer to the airport for an afternoon flight to Delhi. Own arrangements to depart. (B)

### **Christmas Ride 2011 / 2012 - Example Itinerary**

**Day 1 (21st December)** - Your own arrangements to arrive in New Delhi. Met on arrival and transferred to the 5\* Imperial Hotel or similar for the night. Own arrangements for meals.

**Day 2 (22nd December)** - Collected from the hotel at about 09.00 and driven to Dundlod Fort (about 5 or 6 hours). Dundlod Fort is in the heart of the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan on the edge of a town of the same name. The original fort was built in 1750 and part of the old building, which is a mix of Mogul and Rajputana architecture, is now used for guests. Although now rather dilapidated, it is an interesting place to stay, giving a real insight into how the old Indian families used to live. Dinner and overnight Dundlod Fort. (B,L, D)

**Day 3 (23rd December)** - Today you will try the horses with a ride in and around Dundlod town, passing various houses, monuments and temples. Return to the Fort for lunch and in the late afternoon ride out again if you wish. The terrain around this semi-desert area is soft and sandy and ideal for getting used to the horses with plenty of opportunities for some good canters if you wish. Dinner and night Dundlod Fort. (B,L,D)

**Day 4 (24th December)** - A moving day, riding to Mandawa (about 22 kms). The route passes through villages and farmland dotted with Khejri trees and the terrain, which is quite flat except for the occasional sand dune, is excellent for riding. Arrive Mandawa and ride to the imposing Mandawa Castle, a large fort built in 1755, now beautifully restored and converted to a comfortable hotel. Like many historic homes, Mandawa Castle is a curious mixture of old and new and its medieval turreted towers and palanquin-roofed balconies, blend with modern comfort in old world **cont. over**

**Day 4 (24th December) cont** rooms. Dinner and night Mandawa Castle. (B,L,D)

**Day 5 (25th December)** - Ride on to Nawalgarh today (about 25 kms). The Shekhawati region, of which Dundlod, Mandawa and Nawalgarh are a part, is Rajasthan's 'open air Art Gallery' and no other region in India - or perhaps the world - has such a large concentration of high quality frescoes. The town of Nawalgarh was founded in 1737 A.D. It exudes an old charm with its colourful market and has the largest number of painted Havelies in the Shekhawati. Wandering along the noisy, bustling streets you look up to see houses beautifully decorated with frescoes depicting the whole gamut of social and religious life; paintings that show history with humour. Christmas celebrations and overnight Grand Haveli hotel, Nawalgarh. (B,L,D)

**Day 6 (26th December)** - Ride on today to Bhairon Ji Temple (about 32 kms) passing several villages and rural farmers dwellings. The landscape changes dramatically as you ride and takes you close to the great Aravali range of hills. After lunch, ride on through farmland, then follow a dry river bed running parallel to the Aravali Hills. The night in a comfortable tented camp set up close to a small temple. (B,L,D)



**Day 7 (27th December)** - Set off riding across varied sandy terrain with sand dunes, quaint villages and farmland. Stop for lunch, then after lunch approach a big salt water lake with the hills in the background. Head to Kochor village (about 25 kms in all). Night in a tented camp close by. (B,L,D)

**Day 8 (28th December)** - Today's ride is quite short taking you to Danta (about 20 Kms). Ride along the lake shore, then cross a landscape of sand dunes, hills and farmland, passing several villages and a couple of old forts to finally reach Danta Fort in time for lunch. The village of Danta surrounds two fortresses on top of a hill and one of these is now a family run guesthouse, the Dera Danta Kila ('kila' means fort), where the night is spent. (B,L,D)

**Day 9 (29th December)** - Ride from Danta to Kuchaman and overnight in the magnificent Kuchaman Fort. The Fort was established as a 'chowki' (garrison) by the Gurjar Pratiharas sometime between 450 and 750 AD and its formidable ramparts, which are on top of a sheer cliff face, hide 32 bastions and 10 historical gates. (B,L,D)

**Day 10 (30th December)** - Ride from Kuchuman to Nawa across the salt flats of the great Sambhar Lake (the largest salt water lake in India) and through several villages and hills. The salt flats give you the chance of a long exhilarating canter and the whole area is very scenic. Arrive Nawa in the afternoon and the night in a camp set up near the salt flats. (B,L,D)

**Day 11 (31st December)** - Ride from Nawa to Roopangarh (about 25 Kms), again through beautiful country alongside the Aravali hills. The terrain is soft and sandy and provides excellent going and when you arrive at Roopangarh you will stay at the Roopangarh Fort - a 17th century battle fort, now converted to a comfortable hotel. (B,L,D)

**Day 12 (1st January)** - After an early breakfast and farewell to the horses, you will be driven to Jaipur (about 3 hours) and to the Raj Palace Hotel (a Heritage hotel) or similar. In the afternoon there will be time for guided sightseeing in Jaipur, 'The rose-pink capital of Rajasthan' Jaipur is surrounded on all sides by rugged hills, crowned with forts. Enclosed by embattled walls, the city was founded in 1728 by Maharana Sawai Jai Singh who was a keen astronomer and built an observatory, the Jantar Mantar observatory, which still exists and is equipped with quaint masonry instruments of remarkable size including a sundial 90ft high. Other places of interest include the City Palace which now houses a museum containing rare manuscripts,

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**Day 12 (1st January) cont** painting and an armoury, the Museum in the Ram Niwas Palace Gardens, which was founded in 1876 and has a large collection of antiques and The Palace of Winds, a landmark of Jaipur made of pink sandstone and of unique design. Jaipur is also noted for its craftsmen, skilled in the art of cutting precious stones and famed for its garnets and rubies. It is equally well known for brass inlay work, lacquer work and the printings of muslin. Own arrangements for lunch & dinner. (B)



**Day 13 (2nd January)** - In the morning a chance for some shopping and also to see the Amber Fort which is about 12 kms from Jaipur and is an ancient and imposing fort-cum-Palace overlooking the lake at the entrance to a rocky mountain grove. Built in the 17th C, the Fort is a distinguished specimen of Rajput architecture and its Jai Mandir (hall of victory) is so delicately ornamented with fine inlay work it appears to glow. Those who wish can try an elephant ride up the long ramp walkway that leads to the fort before returning to the city in the afternoon for a transfer to Jaipur Airport for the short flight back to Delhi. Transferred to the Imperial Hotel (or similar) in Delhi for the night (own arrangements for lunch & dinner).(B)

**Day 14 (3rd January)** - Transfer to the airport for onward flights (hotel rooms in Delhi are available until 12 noon although can sometimes be extended until 18.00 if required). (B)

### **Nagaur Fair Ride - Example Itinerary**

This ride is planned to co-incide with the Camel Fair which takes place in Nagaur, north east of Jodhpur, in January / February each year. Like the Pushkar Fair, the Nagaur Fair is incredibly colourful and vibrant and is a fascinating event to witness with its traders, lively bazaars, magicians, storytellers, hawkers and so on. It is generally less well known outside India than the Pushkar Fair and hence less touristed. The following is an example of the itinerary planned:

**Day 1** - Own arrangements to arrive Delhi. You will be met on arrival and transferred to the 5\* Imperial Hotel or similar for the night (own arrangements for meals). (NB Rooms are available from 12 noon on if your flight arrives much earlier you may wish to consider booking an extra night's accommodation).

**Day 2** - The day free to visit Delhi and to rest. A half day of guided sightseeing will be organised in the morning. In the evening you will be transferred to the station to take the overnight sleeper train to Bikaner. (NB Generally you will travel in 2nd class air-conditioned sleeper cars which have 4 berths per car - 1st class compartments are not air-conditioned and so are less comfortable). (B)

**Day 3** - Arrive Bikaner in the morning and then you will be transferred to the lovely Laxmi Niwas Palace on the outskirts of the city. This imposing red sandstone palace was built by Maharaja Ganga Singh, commemorating his father Maharaja Lal Singh in the early 20th Century and was designed by Sir Swinton Jacob. It is amongst the purest forms of Rajput palace and full of European luxury! The day to visit the museums and old town of Bikaner with guided sightseeing. Dinner and night Laxmi Niwas Palace. (B,L,D)

**Day 4** - After breakfast, drive about 40 minutes to Gajner and transfer to the Gajner Palace Hotel, a beautiful hotel by the edge of a lake. Meet the horses and after lunch an afternoon ride in and around Gajner to try them. The Gajner Palace is a jewel in the Thar desert. It was built of red sandstone on the embankment of the lake by His Late Highness the Maharaja Ganga Singhji of Bikaner and its intricate carvings demonstrate a wonderful craftsmanship. The surrounding woods are home to wild boar as well as antelope such as Black Buck, Nilgai and Chinkara deer and also to many different species of migratory birds, most renowned being the Imperial Sand Grouse. (B,L,D)

**Day 5** - A day ride of about 35 kms towards the village of Jai Singh in the Thar Desert, quite close to the border with Pakistan. Trees and grass are sparse in this area and in some places the shifting sands have created spectacular dunes that tower above the plain. Despite the austerity of the land a surprising number of people manage to eek out a living here and you ride past several small villages. In the late afternoon arrive at the spot where camp is set up in the desert. Dinner and the night in camp. (B,L,D)

**Day 6** - Breakfast in camp, then ride on about 35kms to Kakku village. The ride today takes you across farmland and past huge dunes. Stop for lunch en-route and in the afternoon arrive at Kakku, where the night is spent in an ancient 'haveli' (merchant's house) and in comfortable new bungalows adjacent to it. In the evening, over dinner, a chance to watch a typical Rajasthani display by fire dancers who walk barefoot on burning coals and carry them in their mouths in an ancient ceremony which seems to defy nature. (B,L,D)

**Day 7** - Ride on about 30 kms to Tantwas village where another camp is set up in the desert. Chinkara gazelles are again common and you may also catch a glimpse of the elusive desert fox. Dinner and overnight in camp. (B,L,D)

**Day 8** - Breakfast in camp and a ride of about 30 km to Khari village, passing through a couple of small villages and several areas of farmland and large sand dunes. Today there is also a good chance of spotting the elusive desert fox. Camp is set up close to Khari. Dinner & night in camp. (B,L,D)



**Day 9** - Breakfast in camp and ride on about 30 kms to Nagaur. This ride takes you across farmland and past several villages and you will also have a chance to climb one of the largest sand dunes in the area on foot. There is a small temple on the top and a lovely view of the entire area. Arrive Nagaur in the afternoon, where the Fair will be in full swing with a hubub of camels and other animals, hawkers and traders. Dinner and night in camp, set up away from the town, quite close to the Fair (B,L,D)

**Day 10** - A day to visit the Camel Fair by horse and on foot. There are usually about 25,000 camels on display at the fair, as well as horses, cattle and numerous hawkers and stalls selling handicrafts, jewellery, cloth and so on. People come from hundreds of miles to buy and sell their livestock and the Fair is a wonderful example of the ancient traditions of rural India. Dinner and second night in camp. (B,L,D)

**Day 11** - After breakfast, say farewell to your horse and to the camp staff and set off by vehicle to Khimsar (about an hour's drive). The night will be spent in great luxury at the Khimsar Fort Hotel. Khimsar is quite a large desert village with a magnificent fort built by an oasis centuries ago. The fort has now been beautifully restored and converted into a splendid hotel with all the luxuries of steam baths, saunas, traditional Ayurvedic massage and a lovely swimming pool - very welcome after several days riding and sleeping in the desert!! The Fort of Khimsar was built by Rao Karamsiji, the 8th son of the founder of Jodhpur, Rao Jodha, who moved to this region and founded the royal dynasty at Khimsar. The initial construction of the fort began in 1523 but the family moved in during the 18th C when a new 'zenana' (ladies) wing was built. Today Khimsar Fort ranks amongst the premier classified Heritage (palace) Hotels in India (B,L,D)

**Day 12** - After breakfast you will be driven to Jaisalmer (about 4 to 5 hours) where the night is spent at the 4 \* Hotel Fort Rajwada, a fairly large luxury hotel that is newly built in Rajasthani style and is one of the best in and around Jaisalmer. In the afternoon time to look around the town, a remote and picturesque 12th C desert outpost, an ancient walled city, built of sandstone. The yellow sandstone walls and 99 bastions seem to rise out of the desert haze and the intricate streets wind their way amongst wonderfully carved and ornamental buildings, the 'havelis' (houses) that once belonged to the wealthy Jain merchants who were displaced by the British Raj.

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These houses are notable for their intricate 18th and 19th Century workmanship and are now protected by the government. Dinner and overnight at the Hotel Fort Rajwada in Jaisalmer. (B,L,D)

**Day 13** - The morning for sightseeing with your guide and the afternoon to relax, swim in the hotel pool and for shopping in Jaisalmer. Second night at the Hotel Fort Rajwada. (B,L,D)

**Day 14** - After an early breakfast, driven to Jodhpur (about 5 hours) and to the Bal Samand Palace, a lovely hotel about 5 kms north, belonging to the Royal Family of Jodhpur. The hotel is a fine specimen of Rajasthani architecture, built of red sandstone on the edge of the Bal Samand Lake and surrounded by wide expanses of lush green gardens. After lunch there will be time for guided sightseeing in Jodhpur, Rajasthan's 'blue city', including a visit to the remarkable Mehrangarh Fort and the old part of the town. Your own arrangements for lunch & dinner. Overnight at the Bal Samand Palace. (B)

**Day 15** - Take the early morning train to Jaipur, the 'rose pink capital of Rajasthan'. On arrival you will be transferred to the Hotel Raj Palace or similar. The afternoon for guided sightseeing in Jaipur, founded in 1728 by Maharana Sawai Jai Singh. You can visit the Jantar Mantar observatory, which still exists and is equipped with masonry of remarkable size including a sundial 90ft high; the Palace of the Winds and the City Museum. Jaipur is also noted for its craftsmen, skilled in the art of cutting precious stones, for its inlay work, its lacquer work and for the printing of muslin and there will be time for some last minute shopping. Own arrangements for lunch & dinner. (B)

**Day 16** - A free morning for sightseeing, with a chance to visit the Amber Fort, an imposing 17th Century fort cum Palace about 12 kms outside Jaipur, and to take an elephant ride up the winding entrance road to the gates of the fort itself. In the late afternoon you will be taken to the airport for a short flight back to Delhi, arriving Delhi at about 19.00. Transfer to the international airport in Delhi for your onward journey. (B)

(draft 15/03/11)

