

## JAI SHRI GANESHA

You are cordially invited to join a once in a lifetime experience!

# ETERNAL INDIA

A cultural pilgrimage designed and led  
by

Alistair Shearer

October 28<sup>th</sup> – November 19<sup>th</sup> 2015.

### Full itinerary:

#### **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October Day Zero: Leave London Heathrow\***

#### **Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> October Day 1: Arrive New Delhi.**

Arrive at Indira Gandhi International airport where you will be met and transferred to our hotel. Your room has been reserved for you from 12 noon today.

After lunch in a local restaurant, we shall have a gentle afternoon visit to the tomb of the Mughal emperor Humayun, to whom we owe so much of the Persian influence in north Indian culture, followed by an evening visit to Nizamudin Sufi shrine for Qaawali devotional music.

*Dinner & overnight in The Metropolitan Nikko Hotel.*

#### **Fri 30<sup>th</sup> Oct. Day 2: Delhi.**

Today we get a taste of two contrasting facets of the architectural palimpsest that is Delhi, by visiting the Friday Mosque and the surrounding bazaar of Old Delhi, a veritable rabbit-warren of fascinating shops and market stalls. After lunch in local restaurant and a free afternoon we visit the atmospheric Bangla Sahib Sikh temple for evening prayers.

*Dinner & overnight in The Metropolitan Nikko Hotel.*

#### **Sat 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. Day 3: Delhi – Jhansi (by train) – Orchha (c. 18 kms drive)**

Early morning we board the Shatabdi Express at 6am for Jhansi, arriving at 10.45 hrs. Then onwards to Orchha and check into the hotel. Afternoon of sightseeing of the Fort and surrounding village.

*Lunch, dinner & overnight in the Amar Mahal hotel.*

#### **Sunday 01<sup>st</sup> November Day 04: Orchha**

All day for relaxed sightseeing in this picturesque and unspoilt place.

*Lunch, dinner & overnight in the Amar Mahal hotel.*

#### **Monday 02<sup>nd</sup> Nov. Day 5: Orchha – Khajuraho (c. 175 kms drive)**

An all-day drive at an easy pace, with stops and lunch *en route*.

Arrive and check into our hotel

*Dinner & overnight in the Taj Chandela Hotel.*

#### **Tuesday 03<sup>rd</sup> Nov. (Day 6) Khajuraho**

Today we visit the world-renowned complex of Hindu and Jain temples, dating from the tenth century AD, the lasting artistic legacy of the medieval Chandela dynasty. Intricately carved in honey-coloured sandstone with motifs of deities, courtly retinues and amorous couples, they comprise the most spectacular group of small ornamented shrines in Northern India.

*Dinner & overnight in the Taj Chandela Hotel.*

**Weds 04<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 7) Khajuraho – Varanasi.**

After a morning to wander round the town, we take flight that departs from Khajuraho 15:05 hrs, and arrives in Varanasi 15:55 hrs. Upon arrival pick up with assistance and transfer to hotel. Evening puja celebrations will be there.

*Lunch at hotel in Khajuraho; Dinner & overnight in Ganges View Hotel.*

**Thurs 05<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 8) Varanasi.**

There is probably nowhere in the world with an atmosphere comparable to Kashi, The City of Light. We shall have ample time over the next three days to imbibe it deeply, with walks through the twisting lanes of the old city and along and around the *ghats* that lead down to the river Ganges and visits to markets, temples ashrams and Muslim shrines. In the evening we can attend the spectacular ceremony of offering lights (*arti*) on the riverbank.

*Lunch at local restaurant; Dinner & overnight in Ganges View Hotel.*

**Fri 06<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 9) Varanasi – Sarnath -Varanasi.**

Today we start with a trip on the river, followed by an excursion of 18 kms to the Deer Park at Sarnath, the site of the Buddha's first public teaching. As well as the park, there are colourful Buddhist temples here of various denominations as well as the excellent little museum.

*Lunch, dinner & overnight in Ganges View Hotel.*

**Sat 07<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 10) Varanasi.**

Leisure and sightseeing, including a specially arranged *puja* for the group at a local temple.

*Lunch at local restaurant; Dinner & overnight in Ganges View Hotel.*

**Sun 08<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 11) Varanasi – Kolkata (by air)**

Most of the day free for independent activities. After lunch we take flight that departs Varanasi 17:50 hrs, and arrives at Kolkata at 19:40 hrs for immediate transfer to our splendid hotel, which gives us a taste of the city's formerly grand style.

*Dinner & overnight in Oberoi Grand Hotel.*

**Mon 09<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 12) Kolkata.**

All-day sightseeing of this extraordinary metropolis, once 'the second city of the Empire', which has something for everyone. Our visits will include a morning walking-tour in the old city that includes the religious image makers' quarter and the flower market and the Kali *ghat* and temple after which the city is named

*Lunch at local restaurant. Dinner & overnight in Oberoi Grand Hotel.*

**Tues 10<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 13) Kolkata.**

All-day sightseeing; visits include the Victoria Memorial, a fine example of Imperial architecture, which stands proud in the heart of the city and a nineteenth century Jain Temple carved in marble inlaid with mirror work. We shall also cruise up the Hooghly River in a chartered launch to see the Dakshineswar Kali temple, where the great saint Ramakrishna lived, and the Swami Vivekananda memorial at Belur nearby.

*Lunch at local restaurant. Dinner & overnight in Oberoi Grand Hotel*

**Weds 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 14) Kolkata-Bhubaneshwar (by air) - Puri (c. 75 kms drive).**

Today we depart Kolkata at 12:05 hrs, arriving Bhubaneshwar at 13:20 hrs. Upon arrival pick up and drive to Puri. Arrive and check into our hotel by teatime.

*Dinner & overnight in Hotel Mayfair Heritage.*

**Thurs 12<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 15) Puri**

The next few days will be spent exploring Orissa (now called Odisha) a part of India little visited by tourists but full of historical, religious and ethnic interest. We begin by viewing the great temple dedicated to Krishna in his form as Lord Jagannath ('Lord of the Universe'), then wander through the streets and shops of this ancient and fascinating pilgrimage town. During our time here we shall also, if possible, have an audience with the Shankaracharya of Puri, one of the five supreme authorities of orthodox Hinduism, who is widely recognized as a living saint.

*Lunch at local restaurant; Dinner & overnight in Hotel Mayfair Heritage*

**Fri 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 16) Puri – Konarak – Puri (c. 70 kms drive)**

In Indian thought, the sun is the deity Surya who is pulled across the sky each day in his magnificent chariot. At Konarak, on the Bay of Bengal, this chariot has been carved in stone and although the temple is damaged, it is still impressive and atmospheric, an 11<sup>th</sup> century structure that is a moving monument to time and the power of change. We shall also visit the architectural museum.

*Lunch in Konarak; dinner & overnight in Hotel Mayfair Heritage*

**Sat 14<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 17) Puri**

A free day for independent sightseeing activities. Lunch at a local restaurant.

*Dinner & overnight in Hotel Mayfair Heritage*

**Sun 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 18) Puri – Bhubaneshwar (c. 75 kms drive).**

Morning after breakfast drive to Bhubaneshwar, visiting en-route the Raghurajpur Crafts village and Pipli, the centre for the appliqué work which depicts the essence of Orissa's popular culture.

*Lunch at local restaurant; Dinner & overnight in The Trident Hotel.*

**Mon 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 19) Bhubaneshwar.**

Today we visit Bhubaneshwar, a city renowned for its collection of delicately carved stone temples, dating from the ninth century and fashioned in the distinctive local style.

*Lunch, dinner & overnight in The Trident Hotel.*

**Tues 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 20) Bhubaneshwar.**

Another leisurely day of sightseeing in the city and surrounds, including the local Buddhist cave temples in the hills of Udayagiri and Khandagiri. These beautifully situated shrines were very important in the early spread of the faith, and have yielded important early inscriptions going back over two thousand years. We shall also visit Chausat Yogini Mandir, the extraordinary Great Goddess Temple dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

*Lunch at hotel; Dinner & overnight in The Trident Hotel.*

**Weds 18<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 21) Bhubaneshwar – New Delhi (Flight).**

Morning at leisure, with a transfer to the airport for our flight to New Delhi that departs Bhubaneshwar 14:05 hrs. and arrives in New Delhi at 16:10 hrs. Transfer to our hotel, where we shall enjoy a sumptuous Farewell Dinner.

*Packed lunch-box to be carried from hotel; Dinner & overnight in The Uppal Hotel.*

**Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. (Day 22) New Delhi - UK (by air)**

Today, after breakfast, our international flight leaves for London and we arrive home the same day.

**Addenda:**

1) **While everything mentioned in the above itinerary will be included if at all possible, the actual order/sequence of planned visits may be altered according to local circumstances.**

2) **\*Recommended International flights:**

***Outward:*** BA 257, departs LHR Terminal 3 at 19.30 hrs on 28.10.15, arrives Delhi at 09.10 hrs (local time) on 29.10.15.

***Return:*** BA 256, departs Delhi at 11.10 hrs on 19.11.15, arrives LHR Terminal 3 at 15.10 hrs (local time) on 19.11.15.

3) **Price of the tour: £3,450 (single room supplement: £865)**

**n.b. The £ sterling is currently quite weak and fluctuating against the India rupee, but we shall do everything in our power to hold this price.**

**This price includes:**

- a) Total 21 nights double/twin sharing on a full board basis i.e. breakfast, set menu lunch & dinner and accommodation as stipulated in the itinerary.
- b) All arrival/departure transfers, sightseeing tours and overland journeys using one AC Tourist Coach as per programme
- c) Accompanying Tour Escort service throughout the tour (including the escort's domestic flight airfares and accommodation in small local guest houses)
- d) Local English-speaking guide during sightseeing on occasion as per itinerary
- e) Site guiding and lectures on coach from accompanying Indologist, Alistair Shearer
- f) Economy class domestic flights Khajuraho/Varanasi/Kolkata/Bhubaneswar/New Delhi
- g) Single entrance fees for all temples/monuments/museums during sightseeing
- h) 1<sup>st</sup> A/c Class train fare from New Delhi to Jhansi
- i) Boat cruises on the Ganges in Varanasi and on the Hooghly in Kolkata
- j) 2 half-litre bottles of mineral water per person per day
- k) All currently applicable taxes.

**This price does not include:**

International flight airfare from your home country to India and back; airport departure tax; any pre- or post-tour bookings at our New Delhi hotels; extra sightseeing not included in the programme; personal expenses such as bar bills, telephone calls, tips, beverages, medical/travel insurance, still/video camera fees, ayurvedic/SPA treatment cost or any other cost which is not mentioned in the 'price includes' section.

All enquiries re. booking etc. please email Alistair Shearer on [aliontheroad2@gmail.com](mailto:aliontheroad2@gmail.com)

d.o.i. 29.01.15