South India

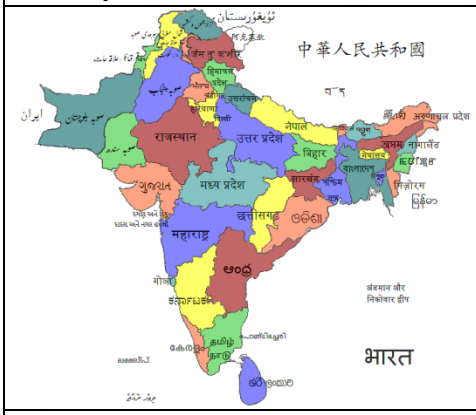
With Fran Gallo, Arvind Singh & Kelley McHenry

January 2 –18, 2018

Meet the natural beauty, stunning architecture, and the intriguing culture of South India. This journey combines daily yoga and a fabulous tour including historical Mumbai, colorful culture, a cooking class, and wild elephants! Explore the 2,000 year-old caves at Ellora and Ajanta that feature monasteries and temples hewn out of rock. Marvel at the intricately carved temples of Madurai, covered in vividly painted figures of deities, mythical creatures and monsters. Cruise on a wooden rice boat through Kochi's maze of backwaters to observe village life along the shore. Cross over the Western Ghats to Periyar National Park, India's earliest wildlife sanctuary and one of the best places to see the Asian elephant. Walk in a spice plantation and learn about the many different uses of spices, both in medicine and food and then use them to cook a delicious meal.

January 2 Begin your journey to the "land of wonder"

January 3 Mumbai



Please arrive by 12:00 pm (noon). Meeting and assistance on arrival and transfer to the hotel (Hotel check in time would be 12 noon on this day so let us know if you require earlier check in). Welcome dinner and orientation to India. Overnight at the hotel.

WELCOME TO INDIA!

January 4 Mumbai

Early morning enjoy yoga from 7:00-8:15. Breakfast at the hotel from 8:45-9:30. Later at 9:45 proceed for the city sightseeing tour of Mumbai which includes a combination walking tour of the 'real life' of the city as well as a drive past many of its famous sights. We will visit Hanging Gardens which offers a splendid view of the city, Chowpatty Beach, Kamala Nehru Park and also Mani Bhavan where Mahatma Gandhi stayed during his visits to Mumbai. Walk through the amazing 'Dhobi Ghat' where Mumbai's laundry is scrubbed, bashed, dyed and hung out to dry. Watch the local train passing close by on which the city commuters literally 'hang out like laundry' - a nice photography stop. Continue to the colorful Crawford market and the Flora fountain in the large bustling square, in the heart of the city. Drive past the Afghan Church, Secretariat of Maharashtra Government and along the Marine Drive which is fondly known as the 'Queen's Necklace', and visit Gateway of India, Mumbai's principle landmark. This arch of yellow basalt was erected on the waterfront in 1924 to commemorate King George V's visit to this colony in 1911. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner at the hotel.

January 5 Mumbai – Aurangabad

Early morning enjoy yoga from 7:45 till 9:00. Breakfast at the hotel. In time transfer from hotel to the airport to connect flight for Aurangabad and on arrival check in at the hotel. Depart for airport at 12:00pm for flight to Aurangabad. Meeting and assistance on arrival and transfer to the hotel. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

January 6 Aurangabad

Early morning yoga from 7:00 till 8:00. Morning excursion to the UNESCO World Heritage site, Ellora Caves 15 kms from Aurangabad. The famous rock cut cave temples of Ellora depict the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain faiths, and were constructed between the 5th and 8th centuries AD. Of particular interest is the architectural marvel of the monolithic Kailasa temple, the Buddhist Vishvakarma chaitya and Vihara, the Jain cave number 32, famous for a magnificent Yakshi statue and ceiling paintings. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

January 7 Aurangabad

Morning yoga from 7:00 till 8:15, later proceed for the full day excursion to UNESCO World Heritage site, Ajanta Caves. Ajanta's wondrous cave temples are cut into the rocky sides of a dramatic crescent-shaped gorge, at the head of which is a waterfall that drops over the mountain rim in a series of seven steps to a pool far below. Dating back to the 2nd century BC, deep inside the mountain are the Buddhist chaitya, vihara prayer and monastery caves. They cover a span of 800 years where, under the royal patronage of ruling dynasties, professional artists helped Buddhist monks to create magnificent murals narrating the story of Buddha in his cycle of incarnations, while simultaneously creating a painted record of the panorama of life in ancient India. Etched and painted in mineral dyes, the paintings have a languorous stylized beauty and magical eloquence. Later, drive back to Aurangabad and check in at the hotel. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. Evening free.

January 8 Aurangabad – Chennai– Mahabalipuram

In time transfer from hotel to the airport to connect flight for Chennai (We will request the hotel for a packed breakfast, depending on the operation of the restaurant / coffee shop). Meeting and assistance on arrival and transferred directly to your hotel in Mamallapuram, which is located on the coast on the Bay of Bengal. After you check in, you will have some free time on your own. Enjoy Yoga from 4:00pm till 5:00pm. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

January 9 Mahabalipuram

Early morning enjoy yoga from 7:00 till 8:15, later proceed for breakfast from 8:45 till 9:30, After breakfast start your day at Mamallapuram with a visit to the beautiful 7th-century Shore Temple which is surrounded by lush gardens, followed by an exploration of the celebrated bas-relief at Arjuna's Penance and the Five Rathas. The afternoon is at leisure on the beach, shopping, walking around the town. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

January 10 Mahabalipuram -- Trichy

Early morning enjoy yoga from 7:00 till 8:15; later proceed for breakfast from 8:45 till 9:30. Today you continue to Trichy, the old citadel of the Chola Dynasty in the medieval period, where you visit the Rock Fort. A climb of 434 steps leads to the ancient temple of Ganapati on top and a further climb to a Shiva temple. Dinner at the hotel and evening rest and relax.

January 11 Trichy – Madurai

Early morning yoga from 7:00 till 8:15; later proceed for breakfast from 8:45 till 9:30. Continue your journey to Madurai, the oldest city in Tamil Nadu and South India's greatest temple town. As such, it is a significant pilgrim site. Over the five hour drive we will get a sense of how people live in Tamil Nadu villages. Stop for lunch. Rest and relax upon reaching Madurai. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

January 12 Madurai

Early morning enjoy yoga from 7:00 till 8:15; later proceed for breakfast from 8:45 till 9:30. Today you will visit the thousand-year-old Meenakshi Temple, one of India's largest pilgrim sites with its 12 towering gopurams. It is an unforgettable experience to observe the rituals and celebration during the evening puja ceremony inside the Meenakshi Temple. Later, visit the Tirumala Nayak Palace-a gracious building revealing the power and wealth of the Nayakas who made Madurai their capital in the 16th and 17th centuries. Continue to the Alagar Hills and Tirupara Kundran Rock temple. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

January 13 Madurai – Periyar

Early morning enjoy yoga from 7:00 till 8:15, then breakfast from 8:45 till 9:30. After breakfast drive through the Western Ghats to Periyar National Park, India's earliest sanctuary and one of the best places to see the Asian Elephant. After checking into your hotel, you visit one of the spice plantations this area is famous for and learn about the many different uses of spices, both in medicine and food. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

January 14 Periyar

Early breakfast. In the early morning (around 7 am), you'll enjoy a forest trek inside the National Park which takes 1-3 hours depending on the group's interest. After the trekking, drive back to hotel and take free time until late afternoon when you will take boat ride on the Periyar River. Periyar, meaning *big river*, is the longest river in the Indian state of Kerala. Early evening is a nice time of day to see many animals come to the water to drink. Look for river otters, elephants, Indian bison (gaur), Nilgiri ibex, jungle cat, sloth bear, Indian giant squirrel, sambar, and wild pig, to name a few.

January 15 Periyar – Kumarakom -- Houseboat

Early in the morning at 7:30 am we leave Periyar for Kumarakom, where you embark on your houseboat and start an enchanting cruise along the beautiful backwaters of Kerala; just relax and lay back while you navigate slowly through the tranquil waterways. It is a wonderful opportunity to discover Kerala's rural lifestyle. You'll see that Kerala is known for its cashew nuts, coir trade, rice, pepper crops & coconuts. Your chef on houseboat will prepare delicious Kerala specialties on board. Enjoy Yoga on board 4:00 till 5:15pm. Dinner and overnight on board.

January 16 Houseboat – Alleppey – Cochin

After a breakfast on the houseboat, disembark, say goodbye to the backwaters and head for Cochin, Kerala's most cosmopolitan city and an important trading center for spices. The afternoon is yours, until yoga from 3:00-4:15. Early in the evening you will enjoy Kerala's signature performance of Kathakali, a classical form of dance, drama and music that is more than 400 years old. Then head to the home of Maria George for a South Indian cooking demonstration and delicious home-cooked South Indian dinner! Overnight at the hotel.

January 17 Cochin

Early morning enjoy yoga from 7:00 till 8:15; later proceed for breakfast from 8:45 till 9:30. After breakfast you start your exploration of Fort Cochin. Follow the footprint left centuries ago by Dutch, Portuguese, British, Arab and Chinese and soak up the cultural atmosphere as you stroll along the quaint narrow lanes of Fort Cochin to visit the Dutch Palace, St Francis Church and India's oldest Jewish Synagogue in Jew Town. Later head to the harbor where local fishermen use the old Chinese fishing nets, introduced and erected centuries ago. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

January 18 Depart Cochin

Early morning yoga and breakfast, then check out and head to the airport to connect to your flight home, taking with you many wonderful memories and fabulous photographs! Namaste!

Trip cost: $4750. Includes: yoga, guide fees, all flights and other transportation within India, 5 star hotels, breakfasts and dinners, hotel and driver tips, entrance fees, and guest experts on Indian culture. Cost does not include tip for guide, drinks, room service, non-group activities, personal expenses, or international airfare. Itinerary is subject to change as needed.

A deposit of $500 will reserve your spot (fully refundable before June 30, 2017). 50% of the total cost of the tour is due by July 30. If the retreat/tour is canceled due to lack of participants, you will be granted a full refund. A minimum of 10 people is required for the trip to occur. We do anticipate meeting our goal of 10 participants. We will contact you after July 30 to let you know if we have met our minimum so that you can go ahead and purchase your flight. Please send in your check with the registration form as soon as possible to guarantee your place and help us make all the train and hotel bookings in a timely way.

Kelley McHenry, trip organizer, is a librarian at Seattle Central College and holds an MA in International Studies, South Asia from the Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington. She has lived and worked in Kenya and the Netherlands and traveled widely in Asia and Europe, but India is her passion. In addition to academic studies, Kelley has been to India many times, lived with Indian families, studied Hindi, and been leading tour groups to India for the past 12 years.

Dr. Arvind Singh, guide and trip organizer, holds an MA in Indian History & Culture, MA in Indian Philosophy & Religion, and a PhD in Indian Archaeology. He has published three books and 16 research articles on different aspects of Indian culture, ecology, numismatics and archaeology. He was a Senior Fellow of the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi and taught for several years at Banaras Hindu University.

Fran Gallo has led several trips to India for Know India Travel and Spiritual India Journeys. She was formerly an English instructor at Green River Community College and now devotes herself to teaching hatha yoga to share its healing and empowering effects. She studied hatha yoga at Ananda Yoga Centre in Nepal and furthered her studies at Ved Niketan Yoga Ashram in Rishikesh, India. For Fran, yoga's magic is in discovering how to go beyond what we perceive as our limits and in the profound sense of wholeness, peace, and balance one obtains from cultivating a yoga practice. www.FranGallo.com.

For more information, please contact Kelley McHenry

Phone: 206-546-2599

Email: kelmch@comcast.net