

Walking India

Adventure Memo

Greetings from the WAI Travel Team,

We are excited about our inaugural visit to India! This is a culture that engages the senses in a powerful way, yet goes beyond the physical to challenge the mind and tug at the heart. India is a land that defies typical travel superlatives. Over 122 native languages are spoken throughout India. A host of ancient religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism, trace their origins here. Poverty in the cities can be numbing, yet the Indian middle class is one of the fastest growing in the world. This is a powerful place of dramatic diversity and fascinating contradictions — we invite you to explore incredible India with us in 2012!

Our program starts and ends in Delhi, a metropolis with a 3000-year-old history that has been home to seven different cities. We visit Agra, with the incomparable Taj Mahal, then continue to Ranthambhore for two game safaris in search of tigers in the reserve along the biosphere of the Chambal River. Along with Delhi and Agra, the Pink City of Jaipur is the third leg of the so-called Golden Triangle, the most frequently visited region of the country.

The journey get even more interesting when we continue deeper into the colorful state of Rajasthan. The second part of our Adventure explores the villages, small towns, and nature areas of this quilt work collection of former Rajasthani kingdoms. From Udaipur, the main tour returns by air to Delhi to connect with flights back to North America. You are invited, however, to continue on a 4-day optional extension to Mumbai for a voluntourism opportunity (see below).

How do I lock in my place on this Adventure?

To save yourself a spot on this Adventure, contact us to register with a \$500 payment as soon as possible! There has been a groundswell of interest in this Adventure, but there is still a good chance that there will be openings. In the event that you are not among the first 30 travelers to register, your registration secures your place on a waiting list.

If you have already Early Birded for this Adventure

If you are among the travelers who submitted Early Bird deposits, you have until **July 18** to secure your spot with a \$500 registration.

Possible second departure

Due to the high level of interest in this India Adventure, a second tour is likely. Dates for a possible second departure would be from November 1—13, 2012, with the Mumbai Voluntourism Project running from November 13—16, 2012.

How should I arrange transportation for this Adventure?

The official start and finish point for this Adventure is Delhi, India, where you will be met at the airport upon arrival. If you opt for the extension, you finish and fly home from Mumbai; the flight from Udaipur back to Delhi or on to Mumbai is included

in the tour price. We recommend that you contact the travel agent we work with to help book your flight arrangements. In this age of airfare complications and airport uncertainty, using a travel agent is a good investment! More details about flight arrangements and travel agent contact information will be provided in the *Adventure Advice* flyer which will be mailed to you after you register for the Adventure. **Please do not book your airfare prior to receiving the Adventure Advice flyer!**

“Voluntourism” Optional Extension in Mumbai!

Last year in Phnom Penh, we offered our first “voluntourism” project, a memorable three days following the Cambodia & Vietnam Adventure which gave travelers an opportunity to go still deeper into Cambodian culture and give back a little at the same time.

We continue to experiment with the concept of “voluntourism”, a descriptive blend of the words “volunteer” and “tourism”. Our objectives, at this stage of development, are to 1) provide travelers opportunities to go even further behind the tourist veneer to gain insight into the realities of life in India, and 2) look for opportunities to contribute to solutions for the many basic challenges people face in the developing world.

We believe adding a low-cost optional “voluntourism” extension to the end of a standard Adventure is a cost-effective way to achieve the objectives listed above. We hope you agree.

We are working with an organization called Family Care Foundation (www.familycare.org), based in California with an affiliate member in Mumbai, that provides aid and inspiration to several literacy and health awareness programs in the slums of Mumbai. The program involves 4 days (3 days in addition to the India tour) as outlined in the enclosed flyer, and includes some basic sightseeing in Mumbai, in addition to our involvement in the slum projects. We hope you will consider adding the high-value, potentially life-changing optional extension to your visit to India!

Uniquely India

A comprehensive *Tips & Tidbits* factsheet will be published about 3 months before departure. A few aspects of this Adventure, however, warrant additional attention on the front end, **before** you register for the tour.

Insurance – What if I need to place a claim?

Jumping through hoops to get results from large, bureaucratic organizations can be enough to try the patience of Job! Travel insurance companies, unfortunately, are not immune to bureaucracy. Ambiguity and forms-overload often seems to outweigh reason and simplicity. Ultimately, however, travelers are paid and the *Preferred Benefits* policy we recommend works! Though it is easy to view insurance as a necessary evil, we have seen the benefits of travel insurance time and again. We believe it is worth the cost...and hoop-jumping required!

Indian cuisine: Much is made about the potential for gastro-intestinal disturbances in India, euphemistically referred to as “Delhi belly”. The flight to Delhi is a long one, and your system is adjusting to many changes. Furthermore, traveler’s diarrhea is always a malady to be prepared for when abroad, and India apparently harbors a few additional bacterial culprits specializing in this area. When investigating inoculations required for this trip (the upcoming factsheet will provide guidance), your doctor or travel clinic should address the medications available for travelers’ diarrhea, including one specifically developed for India. Our advice in this regard is to have the medication tools in your toiletry kit (we didn’t use them on our planning trip) and to use caution, at least initially, in exploring the local cuisine. Almost all meals are buffets, and almost all buffets have both an Indian cuisine section and a Continental (i.e. Western) cuisine section. Cleanliness (hand washing) is also a significant element of staying healthy.

Hotels: One of the surprises of our just-completed planning trip was a delightful variety in hotel accommodations. In our last three locales on the itinerary, the best choices for value and experience are a trio of uniquely-Indian converted castles and small, classy resorts. We believe our accommodations will play a larger than normal role in this travel experience!

Visa: Yes, a visa is required to enter India. After registration, you will receive the *Adventure Advice* flyer giving arrival information necessary to book your air travel to Delhi and back (or back from Mumbai). This flyer will also advise you further on steps to take to obtain a visa.

Group Travel Credit

If you are part of a Group, remember that your full deposit of \$500 is still required to hold your spot on this Adventure. Your group leader is responsible to submit your name in writing to us before you register, qualifying you for the Group Travel Credit, but a full deposit is needed to officially reserve your place.

Travel Insurance

Walking Adventures has negotiated with an insurance carrier to provide travel insurance in the form of a Preferred Benefits™ policy. We are pleased to make this package available and believe that it will provide travelers with an important element of security at a reasonable price. (See the back of the General Tour Conditions sheet for more detailed information.)

IMPORTANT: The insurance policy includes time-sensitive coverage provisions for some benefits, including pre-existing conditions and trip cancellation coverage for any reason (with additional fee), **provided you purchase the insurance within 14 days of your registration.** *Should you choose to add the cost of your airline tickets to your insurance policy, contact our office within 14 days after you purchase your airfare. Airfare is NOT automatically covered by the insurance you purchase for the tour!!*

What Happens Next?

Upon registering for this Adventure, you will receive a welcome letter, initial invoice, and Adventure Advice flyer with important information about steps to take in the months before your trip. **Please do not buy your airline tickets until you receive the Adventure Advice flyer.** The final payment for the program is due 90 days before departure, and you will receive a final billing about 2 weeks prior to that point, along with a factsheet of additional information about the Adventure to help you get prepared! Then, about 3 weeks before departure, you will receive a final packet with all the details of the program, including hotel names and contact information, a list of fellow travelers, and a more detailed daily schedule.

India represents one of our most-adventurous experiences yet. Fascinating, frustrating, delightful, dirty, colorful, culture-crammed, friendly, fantastic... we invite you to join us for the Adventure of a lifetime in a culture that is rapidly changing and quickly growing into one of the planet’s most influential regions. Join us for a journey of discovery — a walking adventure to explore the history, culture, and scenery of *India—Land of 1000 Dimensions!*

More than a vacation...it's an Adventure!

