

## **Mindful India 2020 – For birth professionals** **March 15 – 27, 2020**

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March** – flights to Mumbai.

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March** – Land Mumbai – transfer to Kochi where we will check in to our hotel, get oriented and begin to get to know one another as we begin our adventure. Kochi, a picturesque seaside city often referred to as the gateway to Kerala, has attracted merchants and explorers to its shores for over 600 years. It is a fascinating collage of Portuguese, Dutch, British, Jewish, Christian and Muslim cultures which have left indelible marks on the city.  
Overnight: Kochi

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March** – Today we'll visit Birth Village, a free-standing birthing center set up 10 years ago by certified midwives Priyanka Idicula and Red Millar. They provide water births, Lamaze childbirth education classes and prenatal workouts. They have a 97.9% natural birth rate, with 8-12 births a month. Birth Village provides a comfortable space for men to be active at the birth and children are welcomed. The professional staff also supports abused teenage girls and cares for them until their babies are adopted. We will meet with Priyanka who, together with her colleague, Vijaya Krishnan (whom we will meet on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March) were recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Award at the October 2018 Midwifery Today conference.

The rest of the day will be spent touring. We will enjoy a walking tour of the city, exploring the romantic, ancient alleyways, the famous and picturesque Chinese fishing nets, St. Francis Church, and Mattancherry Palace, built by the Portuguese in 1557 and presented to the Raja of Kochi. We will also visit the exquisite 450-year-old Paradiso Synagogue, which contains an ornate gold pulpit, intricate, hand-painted floor tiles from Canton, China, and magnificent chandeliers from Belgium.

Overnight: Kochi

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March** – Today will be a full-day workshop on mindfulness, geared particularly to birth professionals.

In the evening, we'll take in a **Kathakali performance** (included) at the Kerala Kathakali Centre. Watch the ancient Hindu epics - the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas - come to life through the magic of a Kathakali performance. In this dramatized presentation, face paint, fantastic costumes, and ornamental headpieces transform the actors both physically and mentally

into gods, heroes and demons confronting the eternal themes of righteousness and evil, frailty and courage, poverty and prosperity, war and peace.

Overnight: Kochi

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March** – After breakfast, drive from Kochi to our **Houseboats** for an experience for all the senses.

These houseboats, modified former rice boats, wind their way along narrow, shady canals through isolated villages, traveling through some of the 900 km. network of waterways that are an integral element in maintaining an ecological balance and creating harmony with nature.

Drifting through quiet canals lined with coconut palms, feasting on delicious vegetarian Keralan food prepared by on-board chefs, absorbing the beauty of Kerala villages as we float by them, and falling asleep to the gentle rocking of the water— the houseboat experience is a highlight of a trip to southern India.

Overnight: Houseboat.

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March** – After breakfast, we will transfer from our houseboats to an Ayurveda seaside resort on the beautiful Arabian Sea on India's western coast.

Ayurveda, Sanskrit for “the science of life”, is a way of living, teaching that health is not just a physical phenomenon but a mental, physical and social one as well. Each individual is treated as a whole rather than just targeting an affected part of the body, and emphasis is placed on prevention as well as cure through balancing the three humors, *doshas*, of the human body: vata, pitta and kapha.

Although Ayurvedic spas can be found all over India, the most famous ones are in Kerala because of its natural abundance of forests with a wealth of herbs and medicinal plants. In fact, our resort grows a variety of fruit and vegetables in its own 4-acre organic garden, and we will enjoy them in our delicious meals.

During our stay, each participant will meet with an Ayurvedic doctor for a personal diagnosis, finding out what foods to eat according to her/his personal diagnosis for optimal health, and will receive a relaxing, traditional Kerala herbal massage (both included). You can relax on the beach with its glistening golden sand and swaying palm trees, or refresh yourself by soaking in the large salt-water swimming pool.

Overnight: Beach Resort.

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March** – Take an early morning walk to the fish-landing harbor to watch the fresh catch being brought in from the sea.

Morning - Mindfulness workshop.

In the afternoon, you can again choose how to spend your free time: lounge by the pool or the beach or take a stroll with one of the resort's naturalists for an introduction to the Malabar coast's unique ecosystem and myriad charms. Overnight: Beach Resort.

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March** – After breakfast, transfer from the Beach Resort to Kochi airport (2-hour drive) and fly to Hyderabad.

Visit Healthy Mother Birth Center and meet with certified midwife Dr. Vijaya Krishnan, its founder. Healthy Mother Birth Center is run by independent midwives who are experts in natural birth and women's health, providing personalized support to thousands of women in preconception, pregnancy, natural childbirth, lactation, postpartum and general women's health. Healthy Mother Birth Center pioneered the practice of collaborative care, in which mothers and babies receive the best of evidence-based midwifery care, backed by obstetric care where medically appropriate.

Healthy Mother Birth Center operates The Sanctum, India's most sought-after natural birth center. Run by expert midwives practicing normal birth, it is equipped with an in-house 24x7 emergency care facility including an operating theater, NICU, etc., with highly skilled Ob/Gyns and pediatricians on staff. The Center runs Lamaze classes and Lamaze childbirth educator training courses, prenatal yoga, prenatal massage, infant massage, postnatal exercise and a physiotherapy clinic.

Overnight: Hyderabad

**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March** – Full day mindfulness workshop for birth professionals. We will review the basics of meditation and mindfulness, suitable for those with some mindfulness background and for those local birth professionals joining us for the first time. We will then cover mindfulness approaches for birth. You will learn how mindfulness can be an extremely helpful tool in labor, and how to help your client use these approaches during labor and birth, even if she has no previous experience with mindfulness.

Overnight: Hyderabad

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March** – After breakfast, transfer to the airport for our flight to Delhi. From Delhi we will drive to Agra. The time we spend traveling together

will allow us to share impressions of our visits to the two birth centers and to delve more deeply into integrating mindfulness creatively into our daily lives.  
Overnight: Agra

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March** – Experience the magic of sunrise at the Taj Mahal, deservedly one of the architectural wonders of the world.

The **Taj Mahal** was built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal who died giving birth to her 14<sup>th</sup> child. Construction began in 1632 CE and was completed in 1648 CE. To create the Taj, the most skilled architects, inlay craftsmen, calligraphers, stone-carvers and masons were called from all across India and lands as distant as Persia and Turkey. The Taj Mahal is considered to be the greatest architectural achievement in the whole range of Indo-Islamic architecture and is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

We will also visit **Agra Fort**, an important 16<sup>th</sup> century fortress of red sandstone which encompasses the imperial city of the Mughal rulers. Its compound includes a number of palaces, such as the Jahangir Palace and the Khas Mahal, built by Shah Jahan (of Taj Mahal fame), large audience halls, such as the Diwan-i-Khas, and two beautiful mosques.

We will then return to Delhi.  
Overnight: Delhi

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March** – After breakfast and check-out, we will visit the impressive **Akshardham Temple**. This majestic marble and red sandstone temple, which opened in 2005, was built by 8,000 volunteers working over 300,000 hours. It is a place of prayer and reflection, inspiring visitors to contemplate the qualities of compassion, prayer and non-violence.

Fly Delhi – Mumbai – onwards.

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March** – Arrival at home