

Mindful India 2018 – The Highlights

Sunday February 25 – Tuesday March 13, 2018

If you make only one trip to India in your life, this is the itinerary for you. Of course, many of our participants are joining us for their third, fourth and even fifth time. Come see why they keep coming back!

And what an itinerary this promises to be!

The former kingdom of **Rajasthan** – sweeping desert terrain, some of the most romantic cities in India, dazzling artistry, a jewel in its own right and featuring Jaipur, one of the gemological capitals of the world...

Delhi, where we'll explore medieval and modern structures saluting power and majesty on the one hand, and spirituality and non-violence on the other...

Rishikesh, the “home” of yoga, where the Beatles and the Beach Boys reincarnated their musical selves. We'll explore our inner selves with the help of local yogis and gurus...

Varanasi, one of Hinduism's holiest sites, where grit and the godly unite in a quest for ultimate liberation. We'll explore the Buddha's formula for ending suffering at the very place where he first presented his message.

The **Taj Mahal**, a monument to everlasting love and one of the architectural wonders of the world...

All this PLUS:

The color, fun, and mayhem of TWO(!) celebrations of the victory of good over evil:

our very own Festival of **PURIM** and the Indian holiday of **HOLI**

And, your very own introduction to the secrets and science of **MINDFULNESS and MEDITATION**.

India is the perfect place explore mindfulness practices as many of them developed here. Today, these ancient techniques are being tested in the lab, and science is providing proof for what practitioners have known all along: these techniques work.

There's a reason why the top corporations (Google, Intel, Apple), world-class sports teams (LA Lakers, Seattle Seahawks) and even the US Marines are using mindfulness techniques:

They can help you sleep better, concentrate better, and focus better.

They can improve your physical and mental health.
They can improve your creativity.
They can help you think clearly and make better decisions under pressure, and bounce back faster when things get tough.

Check this out for yourself, with the guidance of guest lecturer and trip co-leader **Dr. Dina Wyshogrod**, a clinical psychologist and mindfulness expert. Dina will interweave a gentle introduction to mindfulness practices throughout our journey, letting you experiment with these approaches. Whether you're an absolute beginner or an advanced practitioner, explore what these approaches can do for you on the trip... and beyond.

Rachelle Oseran, our logistics and program coordinator, Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting instructor and certified Yoga and Pilates instructor, will co-lead the trip with Dina. Rachelle and Dina will each be teaching mindful movement/yoga, another form of mindfulness training that, no matter what shape you're in, will enhance the flexibility of your body and your mind.

Sunday February 25: The Adventure Begins

Israeli contingent departs Tel Aviv. International travelers are en route from their respective points of origin.

Monday February 26: Mumbai - Udaipur

Land Mumbai and transfer to flight to Udaipur.

We'll check in at our hotel, attend to important details like changing money, and have time for orientation and getting acquainted.

Dinner (included) at the hotel.

Overnight: Udaipur.

UDAIPUR

Arrive Mon. Feb 26 – depart Thurs. March 1

UDAIPUR: “Venice of the East” and “the Romantic Capital of India”. Set amidst the elevated hills and beautiful lakes of the Aravalli Ranges of Rajasthan is the beautiful city of Udaipur, also known as “the city of lakes” and the “garden city”. Udaipur is regarded as one of the most romantic cities of the world, making it a very sought-after tourist destination in Rajasthan, second only to Jaipur.

The city boasts many museums, ornate palaces and dramatic forts, lush gardens, grand monuments, spiritual temples, and colorful festivals. Many of its scenic locations have been featured in films and TV shows such as the James Bond film “Octopussy”, “The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel”, and “The Jewel in the Crown.”

Tuesday February 27: Udaipur

Morning mindfulness practice: meditation and yoga.

After breakfast, enjoy a boat ride on Lake Pichola, a beautiful and picturesque man-made lake (built in 1362!) in the heart of the city.

Visit the City Palace, an enormous complex that houses a museum, luxury hotels, and the apartments of the former royal Mewar family. Although the Mewar family lost its special royal privileges and titles when the princely state of Rajasthan merged with Democratic India in 1949, it has enjoyed a special relationship with the local citizens and has retained its ownership of the palaces in Udaipur.

Lunch (included) at a local restaurant.

After lunch: Free time to explore the city, including a visit to the bazaars of the Old City, a shopper's dream. Indulge your senses and test your bargaining acumen in the market which features everything from textiles in riotous colors to exquisite jewelry.

Dinner (included) at a beautiful restaurant on the shores of Lake Pichola.

Overnight: Udaipur.

Wednesday February 28: Udaipur

Morning mindfulness practice: meditation and yoga.

After breakfast, as part of our commitment to visit and support NGO's and organizations seeking to transform India and empower weaker segments of society, we will visit **Sadhna**, located in Delwara Village. The artisans from the village work at the Common Facility Centre (CRC) set up by Sadhna. This inspiring organization provides alternative income for women in Udaipur's rural, tribal and urban slum belts, enabling them to gain a respectable position in their family and society.

Then we'll enjoy a heritage walk through a local village, catching a glimpse of village life and seeing the townspeople applying their traditional craft skills of pottery, embroidery, patchwork, appliqué and block painting. Some of the beautiful clothes and household fabrics produced by the women here are sold at the local Sadhna store as well as across India through the well-known FabIndia chain.

We'll have the opportunity to shop at the Sadhna store, bringing home beautiful mementos while supporting the empowerment and livelihood of these enterprising women.

Packed lunch (included).

Afternoon: prepare for..... **PURIM!**

Celebrate with Megilla reading and a festive holiday dinner (included).

Overnight: Udaipur.

Thursday March 1: Transfer to JAIPUR

Purim will be marked throughout the day with an early-morning second megilla reading, sharing *mishloach manot* (shared goodies in honor of the holiday), and giving *matanot le'evyonim* (gifts for the less fortunate).

Morning: Check out of the hotel, bidding farewell to Udaipur, and fly to Jaipur. Check in to our delightful Rajasthani-style hotel.

Lunch (included) at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Tour of the Jantar Mantar Observatory and the City Palace.

Jantar Mantar, a World Heritage Site, is the largest and best preserved observatory built by Jai Singh in 1728. While the site looks like a collection of bizarre sculptures, each construction has a specific purpose, such as measuring the positions of the stars and calculating eclipses.

The beautifully decorated **City Palace**, a striking blend of Rajasthani and Mughal architecture, was originally built by Jai Singh in the 1720's. Contained in the Palace are two silver urns, listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the largest crafted silver objects in the world.

Dinner (included) at a local restaurant.

Overnight: Jaipur

JAIPUR

Arrive Thursday March 1 – depart Sunday April 4

Jaipur is the the capital of, and the gateway to, India's most flamboyant state, Rajasthan. Founded in 1726 by Maharaja Jai Singh II after whom the city is named, Jaipur is also known as the Pink City of India.

Highlights of the city include the City Palace which continues to house the local former royal family, the world-famous royal observatory Jantar Mantar, and such architectural beauties as the façade of the honeycomb Hawa Mahal. Perched on some of the arid mountains outside the city is another of Jaipur's famous attractions, Amer Fort.

Jaipur is also famous for arts and crafts. The dazzling work of artisans and craftsmen, prominently displayed throughout the city and its markets, includes block printing, stone carving and sculpture, inlay, vitreous enamel, miniature paintings, the famous blue pottery, ivory carving, shellac work and leather ware. Jaipur is also known internationally as a center of the jewelry and gem trade.

Friday March 2: Jaipur

Morning mindfulness practice: meditation and yoga.

After breakfast: Get set for FUN and COLOR as we celebrate the festival of HOLI, one of India's most exuberant holidays, with our guide and his family in their home. Light lunch (included) at the home of our guide. Return to the hotel to clean up.

Afternoon at leisure in our beautiful Rajasthani hotel, a converted palace, blending heritage, elegance and luxury. Kick back, relax, and prepare for Shabbat.

Kabbalat Shabbat and dinner (included) in our hotel.

Overnight: Jaipur.

Saturday March 3: Jaipur

After breakfast: a workshop on meditation and mindfulness skills.

Yoga.

Lunch (included) at the hotel.

Afternoon – free to enjoy the lovely ambience of our hotel.

Dinner (included) at the hotel.

Overnight: Jaipur

Sunday March 4: Morning in Jaipur, then transfer to Agra

Morning: Visit Amer Fort, one of the top attractions of Jaipur.

Located on a natural ridge 11 kilometers north of Jaipur, this sprawling Rajput fort complex combines both immense fortifications with exquisite artistry displayed in beautifully styled state rooms inlaid with semi-precious jewels and mirrors. Ride an elephant (if available) or a jeep up to explore this magnificent site.

Lunch (included) at our hotel.

Afternoon: Transfer (by bus) to Agra.

Check in to hotel.

Dinner at hotel (included).

Overnight: Agra

AGRA

Arrive Sunday March 4 – depart Monday March 5

Monday March 5: Agra - Delhi

Morning: wake up early to experience the breath-taking experience 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 14th child. Construction began in 1632 CE and was completed in 1648 CE. 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.

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. Admire their work at the Taj, and then see how the descendents of these artisans, 14 generations later, are continuing this tradition of skill and beauty when we **visit a local marble craft factory**.

We will also visit the **Red Fort of Agra** (Agra Fort), an important 16th 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.

Lunch (included) at local restaurant.

Afternoon: Transfer (bus) to Delhi.

Check in to hotel.

Dinner (included) at hotel.

Overnight: Delhi

DELHI

Arrive Monday March 5 – depart Tuesday March 6

Tuesday March 6: Morning Delhi, transfer to Varanasi

Morning mindfulness practice: meditation.

After breakfast and check-out, we will tour some of the highlights of Delhi, including Akshardham Temple, Raj Ghat, and Gurudwara Bangla Sahib.

The majestic marble and red sandstone **Akshardham 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. It also contains an exhibition on Hinduism.

Raj Ghat is a memorial dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi. It is a black marble platform that marks the spot of Mahatma Gandhi's cremation on January 31, 1948, a day after his assassination. It is left open to the sky while an eternal flame burns perpetually at one end.

Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, built in 1783, is one of the most prominent Sikh houses of worship in Delhi and is known for its association with the eighth Sikh Guru, Guru Har Krishan, as well as the pool inside its complex, known as the "Sarovar." It is ranked among the best tourist and pilgrimage spots in Dehli (SURVEY-2017). As with all Sikh houses of workship, it is known for its traditions of hospitality and volunteerism.

Light lunch (included).
Transfer (flight) to Varanasi.
Check-in to hotel.
Dinner at hotel (included).
Overnight: Varanasi.

VARANASI

Arrive Tuesday March 6 – depart Thursday March 8

Varanasi, also known as Benares, is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world (3000 years old) and one of the seven holiest cities for Hindus. Pilgrims come to the ghats (riverside stairs) lining the Ganges River to wash away sins in the sacred waters or to cremate their loved ones. It's a particularly auspicious place to die, since dying here and having your ashes tossed into the river offers moksha (liberation from the cycle of rebirth).

Lonely Planet calls Varanasi “sacred, soulful, spectacular” – and it is all that, and it is intense, as rituals of life and death take place in public. Altogether, visiting this city is an unforgettable experience.

Wednesday March 7: Varanasi

Morning boat ride on the River Ganges to witness prayer ceremonies on the banks

of the river. Enjoy a rickshaw ride and visit Mother India Temple.
Lunch at a local restaurant (included).
Visit weaving center where famous Benares silks are woven.
Evening Aarti ceremony on the banks of the Ganges.

Aarti is a Hindu religious fire ritual in which light from wicks soaked in ghee (purified butter) or camphor are offered up as a way of expressing many things including love, benevolence, gratitude, prayers, or desires, depending on the object it is done to/for. For example, it can be a form of respect when performed to elders, a form of prayers when performed to deities, or hope when performed for homes or vehicles. Aspects of the ceremony symbolise the five elements of space, wind, fire, water, and earth.

Dinner at hotel (included).
Overnight: Varanasi.

Thursday March 8: Varanasi – Delhi

Morning visit to Sarnath.

The deer park in Sarnath, a city located 13 kilometers north-east of Varanasi, is where Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) gave his first public teaching presenting the Four Noble Truths, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. We'll review this important teaching and do a group meditation at this famous site.

Light lunch (included)
Early afternoon flight to Delhi.
Check in to hotel.
Dinner at hotel (included).
Overnight: Delhi

RISHIKESH

Arrive Friday March 9 – depart Monday March 12

Friday March 9: Delhi – Rishikesh

Morning train to Haridwar.
Drive to Rishikesh and check in to hotel.
Lunch (included) at the hotel.

Rishikesh is one of the holy cities of India. Over the years, the city has attracted thousands of Indian and foreign pilgrims and tourists, including the Beatles and

the Beach Boys in the 1960s. It is also considered “the world capital of yoga” thanks to its numerous yoga centers. It is believed that meditation in Rishikesh brings one closer to attaining moksha, the soul’s release from the bonds of transmigration, the ultimate spiritual goal for Hindus.

Afternoon: mindfulness practices and leisurely preparation for Shabbat.
Kabbalat Shabbat and dinner at hotel (included).
Overnight: Rishikesh.

Saturday March 10: Rishikesh

After breakfast: workshop on meditation and mindfulness skills.
Yoga.
Lunch (included) at the hotel.
Free time to explore this vibrant, spiritual city on your own.
Dinner (included) at the hotel.
Evening dance performance by children from the local school and orphanage.
Overnight: Rishikesh.

Sunday March 11: Rishikesh

Morning yoga (optional) taught by a local yoga teacher.
After breakfast – lecture on Hindu philosophy by a local guru (teacher).
Free time to explore the city with its diverse shopping opportunities.
Lunch on your own.
Final dinner (included) at the hotel.
Overnight: Rishikesh.

Monday March 12: Rishikesh – Mumbai – onwards

Morning mindfulness practice: meditation and yoga.
After breakfast, check out of hotel.
Drive (bus) from Rishikesh to Dehradun where we’ll catch a flight to Mumbai.
Packed lunch (included).
Fly to Mumbai and board international flights back home.

Tuesday March 13:

Israeli group lands in Tel Aviv.