



## Intimate Journey to India

*Winter 2009 – 2010 (Dates TBA)*

If you are curious about visiting India but don't want to go alone or with a commercial tourist group, this extensive, reasonably-priced trip with an experienced guide who knows and loves India may be for you.

**Trip Leader:** Born and brought up in Pakistan by Presbyterian missionaries, John Schlorholtz has traveled widely through India, Nepal, and Pakistan. He enjoys offering multifaceted, warm-hearted journeys through India to small, thoughtful groups. John emphasizes travel that is enjoyable, comfortable, and healthy, and he is skilled in maximizing personal wellbeing and minimizing bad stomachs, etc.

**Itinerary:** Ambitious in scope, this trip includes some of the greatest architectural and cultural sites of India, as well as stays at two representative spiritual communities. The first part of the trip involves fairly fast-paced travel through North India, with visits to Ajanta and Ellora, the Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikhri, Khajuraho, and Varanasi (Benares). The second part of the trip, in South India, is more leisurely, giving an opportunity to experience local life and people. This includes stays at the spiritual communities of Auroville (Pondicherry) and Sri Ramanasramam, as well as visits to Mamallapuram and the state of Kerala. For more details on trip destinations, see next page.

**Limited to 10 participants,** the trip involves a lot of travel but also allows for restful stays at important junctures – and a great variety of fine Indian foods.

**Duration:** Approximately 24 days from time of departure until arrival home.

**Cost:** TBA by March, 2009, depending on cost of hotels and flights. Cost of planned 2008 trip was \$4,495, not including flight to Mumbai (Bombay). Trip cost includes all transportation inside India (including 7 flights), all lodging (double occup.), all meals, and all tourism fees. Participants are responsible for cost of visa – and shopping in India.

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## **Journey Destinations** (arrival and departure city is **Mumbai**, a.k.a. Bombay)

- ❖ **Ajanta** and **Ellora**, two of the greatest sites of India, are vast Buddhist and Hindu cave and temple complexes carved out of single rocks. Dating from 200 B.C. to 800 A.D., they contain some of the most famous paintings and sculptures of ancient India. Our hotel is in nearby **Aurangabad**, an important Moslem city.
- ❖ **The Taj Mahal**, **Fatehpur Sikri**, and the **Agra Fort**, with its pearl mosque, are shining examples of Islamic architecture at the city of **Agra**.
- ❖ **Khajuraho** is an extensive Hindu sandstone temple complex covered with exquisite carvings that represent all of life, from the most sublime to the most ordinary – including beautiful erotic sculptures.
- ❖ **Varanasi** (Benares), the oldest city in the world with a continuous culture, is probably the main pilgrimage site of India. We visit temples and float down the Ganges at dawn to see an astounding variety of pilgrims and spiritual practitioners doing their ablutions by the holy river.
- ❖ **Tiruvannamalai** (Tiru) in the South, not too far from Chennai (Madras), is an old and great temple town where we touch ancient, Vedic India with a stay at **Sri Ramanasramam**, an ashram founded by the sage, Ramana Maharshi. He was the teacher of W. Somerset Maugham and the inspiration of Maugham's novel, The Razor's Edge. With its Vedic chanting, traditional devotional songs by local women, and steady flow of visitors from all over India, we get a close-up experience of Indian daily life and spirituality – along with opportunities to explore the surrounding area.
- ❖ **Pondicherry** (Pondy), a French-controlled city until 1954, still proudly maintains its French flavor. It is beautifully situated next to the ocean and is home to the **Sri Aurobindo Ashram**, one of the most well-known spiritual communities in India. Our home base will be a beautiful, rural guesthouse at **Auroville**, a multi-national spiritual community that has reversed desertification in the area by planting over a million trees and also works with local villages to improve living standards, education, and women's empowerment. Eating at fine French restaurants is one of the joys of visiting Pondy.
- ❖ **Mamallapuram** (Mahabalipuram), where temples have been carved out of single rocks, is one of the most important archaeological sites of India.
- ❖ **Kerala**, considered to be one of the most beautiful of Indian states, has a literacy rate of 99%. A remarkable historical and cultural crossroads, it includes a 2,500 year old Jewish community, a Christian community that traces its origins to the Apostle Thomas and still uses Aramaic in its services, and a mosque that was built while Mohammed was still living. We explore the city of **Kochi** (Cochin), walk in verdant forests and in tea and cardamom plantations in the **Western Ghat** mountains, and float through **inland waterways** before heading home.