

# SINGING

*India*

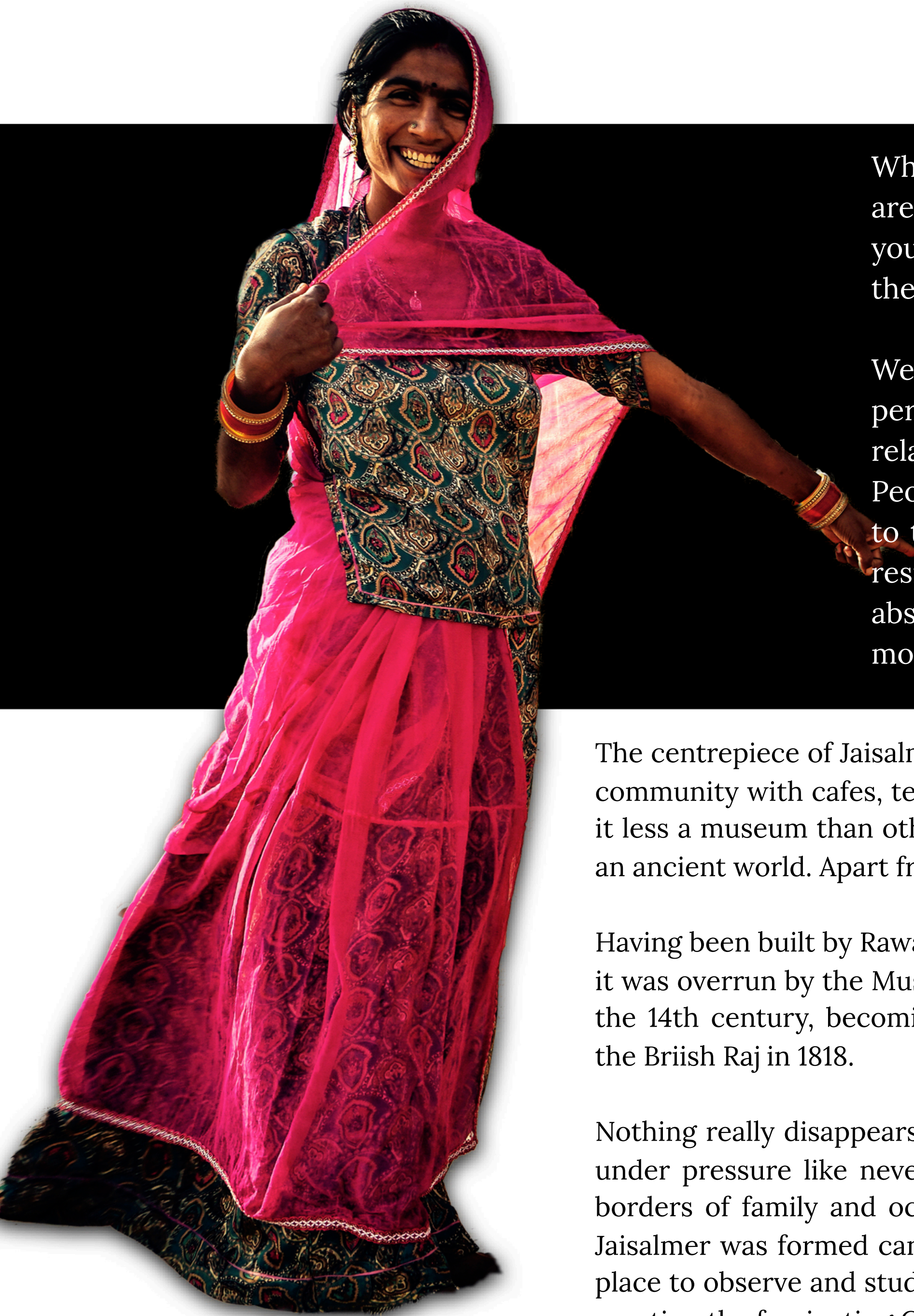
*Blue Swan*





# ITINERARY

## JAISALMER RAJASTHAN



When you are in Jaisalmer you think you are dreaming. When you leave Jaisalmer you start dreaming about being back there.

We chose this beautiful town as the perfect place to acclimatise to India. It is relaxed, small, mesmerisingly beautiful. People respond with warmth and kindness to travellers. It means that over our mini-residency in Jaisalmer you can gently absorb the Indian experience before the more intense Varanasi.

The centrepiece of Jaisalmer is the fort, built in 1156 AD. It is a living community with cafes, temples, hotels, shops and schools. It makes it less a museum than other Rajasthani forts and more a portal into an ancient world. Apart from that it is impossibly beautiful..

Having been built by Rawal Jaisal, a chief of the Rajput warrior caste, it was overrun by the Muslim Delhi sultan 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī early in the 14th century, becoming a Mughal fiefdom, before allying with the British Raj in 1818.

Nothing really disappears in India. The caste system, although now under pressure like never before, holds history within the strong borders of family and occupation. So all those forces from which Jaisalmer was formed can be seen today. It makes this a wonderful place to observe and study the impact of the Mughal Empire, not to mention the fascinating Gypsy people who live in the Thar desert..

Jaisalmer is a wonderland, with opportunities to safely wander the cobble-stoned back alleys of the fort and the dynamic marketplace outside its ramparts. Music and dance breathe an energy into this town, perched alone in the far western border of Rajasthan.

You will be taken to some fascinating places: the glorious Gadisar Lake where we will conduct morning meditation and yoga;; Bada Bagh,, an extraordinary 16th Century cenotaph for cremation of the Maharajas;; beautiful ornate havelis; 7 Jain Temples within the fort alone; the Thar desert itself, home to the Gypsy people and so much more.

None of these sites are an end in themselves. They are talking points leading into the mystery of India, giving you tools and insights into the culture which is about to get a whole lot more intense. But you after 5/6 days in Jaisalmer you are prepared. VARANASI HERE WE COME!



# DELHI - JAISALMER

**This itinerary is a framework that is always subject to change. We stay alive to the possibilities that India offers in an ever-changing and dynamic landscape.**

Day 1: Arrive Delhi - 13th Jan

Arrive at RADDISON BLU HOTEL at 1 pm.

After check-in meet at 2pm in the foyer for a briefing.

Visit the beautiful and culturally important Lodhi Gardens for an initial sing with Sue Johnson and a talk by Sandip on the impact of the Mughals on India.

Return to hotel and formal welcome address and briefing.

Dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: Delhi

Meals: Dinner

Day 2: Delhi - Jaisalmer - 14 Jan

After breakfast check out from the hotel and transfer to the Delhi airport to board your onward flight to Jaisalmer.

Check-in to the Golden Haveli / Narayan Niwas Palace

Lunch at hotel.

Afternoon rehearsal with Sue, Sandip and local musicians in the Hotel to build our repertoire.

Evening stroll to the fort.

Dinner at hotel

Overnight: Jaisalmer

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 3: Jaisalmer - 15 Jan

Early morning singing/meditation in Jain Temple in Jaisalmer Fort.

Return for breakfast at hotel.

Rehearsal and lunch at hotel.

Guided walk through the exotic Jaisalmer Fort.

Afternoon singing session overlooking Jaisalmer at Sunset Cafe.

Dinner at Sunset cafe with local Rajasthani musicians and singers.

Overnight: Jaisalmer

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 4: Jaisalmer - 16 Jan

Morning singing/meditation in hotel.

Breakfast at the hotel with morning rehearsal.

Visit Lake Gadisar and sing with Rajasthani folk musician Amlee Khan on a cenotaph in Lake Gadisar.

Lunch at cafe at the Lake with Amlee Khan and his family. {Own cost for lunch}

Visit buzzing Jaisalmer Bazaar and sing to the women at an NGO for desert woman weavers in a glorious old haveli.

Free time in Bazaar and Jaisalmer.

Dinner at Jaisal Treats.

Overnight: Jaisalmer

Meals: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5: Jaisalmer - 17 Jan

Morning singing/meditation in hotel.

Breakfast then rehearsal.

Lunch at the hotel.

Time to chill. Wander the fort and markets. 'It's all about me' time!

Dinner at hotel.

Overnight: Jaisalmer

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6: Jaisalmer - 18 Jan

Morning singing/meditation in hotel.

Breakfast then short rehearsal.

Visit Bada Bagh, a spectacular Hindu cremation site. Sandip and local guide Dinesh Joshi will give commentary on Hindu practice of cremation. Anub will lead a workshop onsite..

Afternoon drive to Rajasthani Thar Desert school for workshop with children led by Sue Johnson.

Workshop with Maganiyar musician in village..

Big Desert Disco/Bollywood Dance/sing with Gypsy people under the stars.

Overnight: Jaisalmer

Meals: Breakfast, packed Lunch and Dinner





# VARANASI

## UTTAR PRADESH

Describing Varanasi is daunting, not just because of its complex history, but for its extraordinary paradoxes. The most obvious of these has to be the life/death paradox. The most vibrant city in the world teems with life and celebration, yet it is also the city of death and burial, the final destination for Hindus who wish to be cremated by the banks of the Ganges and so escape the karmic cycle of rebirth.

Rebirth is the spiritual version of recycling, and on this Shashi Tharoo, the Indian writer, politician and academic, says "Everything is recycled in India, even dreams.". This is no truer than in Varanasi.

In the 16th century, Varanasi had a cultural revival under the Moslem Mughal emperor Akbar who built two large temples dedicated to the Hindu Gods, Shiva and Vishnu. Then in 1656, Emperor Aurangzeb ordered the destruction of many Hindu temples and the building of mosques from the debris. Recycling of religion and material.

Varanasi, while being India's most important Hindu pilgrimage site, lives alongside Jain, Muslim, Buddhist and Christian beliefs.. Indeed in Sarnath, 10 kilometres from Varanasi, is the site where the Buddha is believed to have given his first sermon around 528 BC -"The Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Dharma".

Varanasi is a visual treat. Actually, it's not a treat, it's a 30 course meal, each different and rich and filling. We will stay by Ganges, with a program as rich as the visuals. There are so many places to sing and experience: the temples of all faiths; the backstreets of Varanasi; the markets selling the silks and brocades with gold and silver thread work, woven carpets, wooden toys, bangles made of glass, ivory work, perfumes, artistic brass and copper ware and a variety of handicrafts.

Varanasi is an intellectual, historical and religious melting pot, and has joined the UNESCO "Cities of Music" Creative Cities Network. What would you expect from the home of Ravi Shankar? We have some wonderful treats in store here, with our own musical director - Dr Sandip Kewale - who operates the International Music Ashram in the backstreets of the Old City.

Beyond all the philosophies and learning is the one constant - Mother Ganges, a fascinating study of India's attachment and yearning for this natural flowing symbol of the divine.



# VARANASI

Day 7: Jaisalmer to Varanasi - 19 Jan

After breakfast, transfer to the airport to board the flight to Varanasi.

Lunch at airport or in flight.

Arrive Varanasi and transfer to the Palace on Ganges just minutes from the Ganga.

Dinner at hotel.

Celebrate the Ganges Aarti on the banks of the river.

Overnight: Varanasi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8: Varanasi - 20 Jan

Up early for a pre-dawn float down the Ganges.

Silent time while we float down the river and listen to Sandip Kewale and flautist ..... Sue will lead musical accompaniment.

Breakfast on the boat.

Visit to Ghats, Temples and Mosque.

Pull up the side of the river for lunch.

After lunch a question and answer session with Dr Rashmi. Topics such as 'Life and Death in Hindu Culture', 'Emergence of Women', 'Caste', 'Acceptance', 'Sadhus' and everything you've always wondered about India.

We will have a primary speaker who will be joined by a number of local academics and musicians.

Finish with a Sue Johnson inspired improv as we come back to Assi Ghat and the hotel.

Dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight: Varanasi.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 9: Varanasi - 21 Jan

Early morning sing and meditation on the Ganges.

Walk through the backstreets of Varanasi.

Breakfast at the hotel.

Singing session in hotel courtyard then free time.

Lunch at hotel.

Depart for Sufi Temple and singing session with the resident priest. Talk on the development of Sufism and the impact of the poet Kabir.

Session with a local group of musicians whose families have lived in one colony for hundreds of years.

Return for dinner at the hotel.

Sing on the Ganges as evening meditation.

Overnight: Varanasi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 10: Varanasi - 22 Jan

Attend morning Aarti at Assi Ghats.

Breakfast at the hotel.

Visit Sarnath where the Buddha gave his first sermon as an enlightened being. Visit the Tibetan University and a walking tour with the vice-Chancellor. Sing in the beautiful quadrangle for a collection of monks.

Lunch on the lawn at the Tibetan University. (Own arrangements)

Afternoon free time.

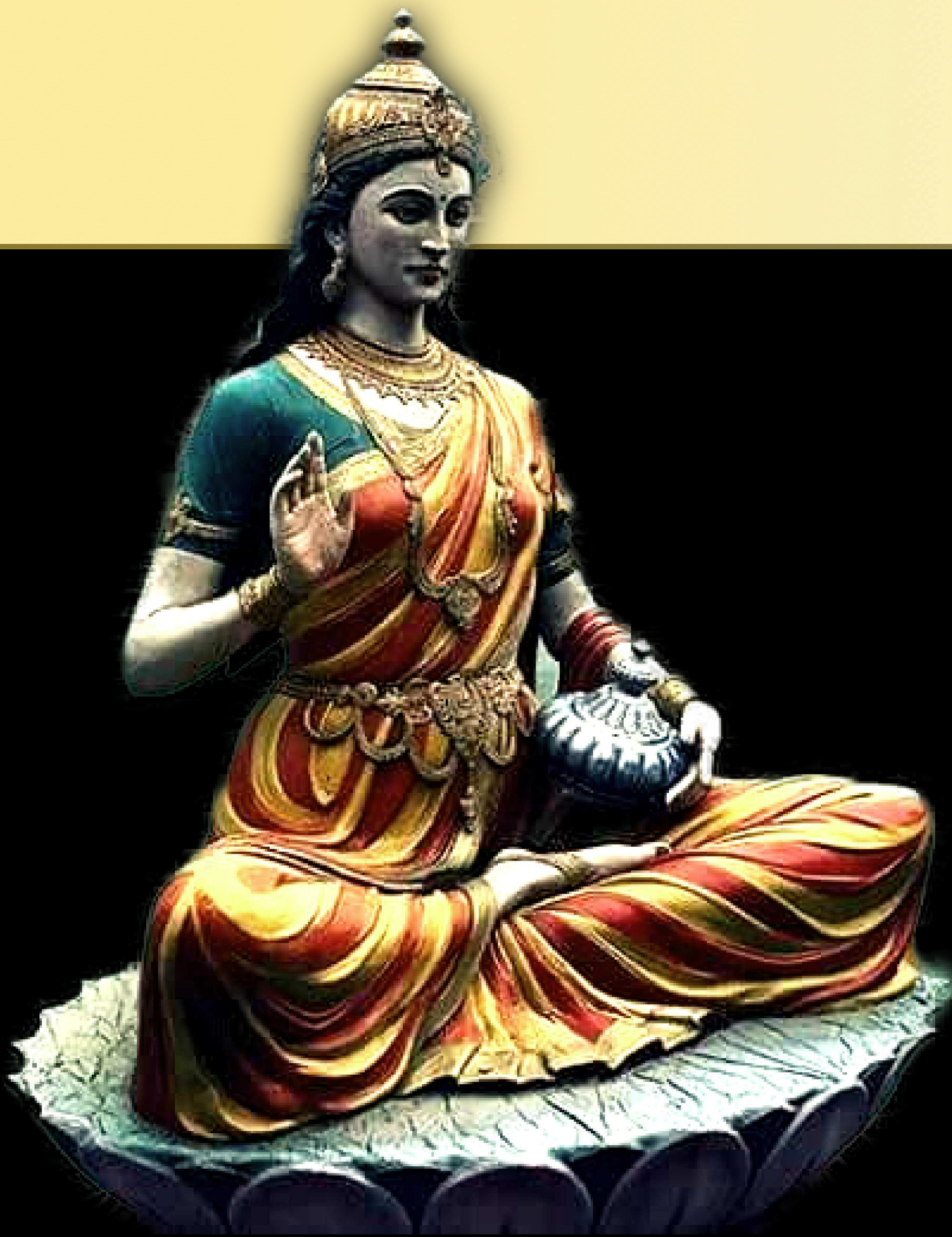
Host an evening meal with a collection of local people from the ICADMY. {International Academy of Arts, Dance, Music and Yoga} Perform our repertoire for them at the hotel, then all go to the banks of the Ganges for an evening sing. (10 Pax covered)

Overnight: Varanasi

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

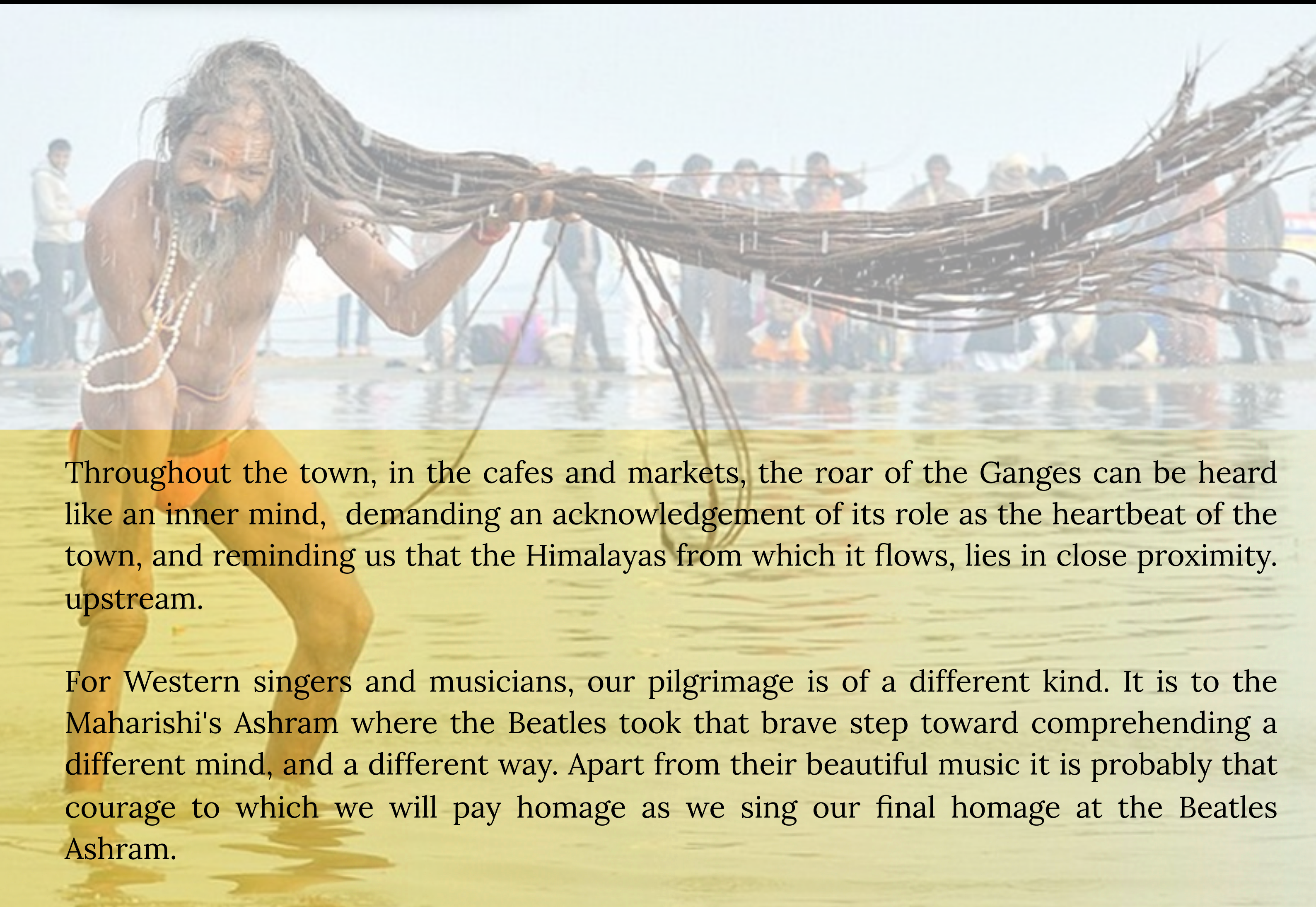


# RISHIKESH UTTARAKHAND



Rishikesh has long been a centre of Hindu pilgrimage, millennia before it became the 'yoga and meditation of the world'.

Since ancient times, Rishikesh has been an important pilgrimage site for saints and Hindu devotees. In the early medieval period the place began to gain huge popularity. and during the 8th century Adi Shankaracharya, one of the most famous and revered Indian sages, built several temples and ashrams. While earthquakes and floods destroyed many buildings, the importance of Rishikesh was established.



Throughout the town, in the cafes and markets, the roar of the Ganges can be heard like an inner mind, demanding an acknowledgement of its role as the heartbeat of the town, and reminding us that the Himalayas from which it flows, lies in close proximity. upstream.

For Western singers and musicians, our pilgrimage is of a different kind. It is to the Maharishi's Ashram where the Beatles took that brave step toward comprehending a different mind, and a different way. Apart from their beautiful music it is probably that courage to which we will pay homage as we sing our final homage at the Beatles Ashram.



# RISHIKESH - DELHI

Day 11: Varanasi –Rishikesh (Flight) - 23 Jan

After breakfast, transfer to the airport to board the flight to Dehradun via Delhi. Arrive Dehradun and transfer to Yog Niketan – Rishikesh/ Divine Resort.

Dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: Rishikesh

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 12: Rishikesh - 24 Jan

Early morning meditation and chanting on the deck by the River Ganges.

Walk with Raj from the hotel. Lunch/swim/sing by River Ganges in front of Ashram.

Afternoon Free Range.

Evening attend Ganga Aarti at Triveni Ghat.

Dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: Rishikesh

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 13: Rishikesh - 25 Jan

Early morning Meditation and chanting on the deck by the River Ganges

Rafting on the River Ganges. Lunch and sing by the river.

Afternoon free time then rehearsal for Beatles Ashram gig.

Dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: Rishikesh

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 14: Rishikesh - 26 Jan

Early morning Meditation and chanting on the deck by the River Ganges

Breakfast then Free Range time at markets.

Visit Beatles Ashram for tour and rehearsal.

Dinner at Ashram then Concert for invited guests. (Ashram dinner on own)

Overnight: Rishikesh

Meals: Breakfast, Packed Lunch

Day 15: Rishikesh – Delhi (Flight) - 27 Jan

After breakfast, transfer to the airport to board the flight.

Arrive Delhi and transfer to the RADDISON BLU HOTEL.

Free range in Connaught Square, Delhi.

Evening farewell dinner at hotel.

Overnight: Delhi

Meals: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16: Depart Delhi - 28 Jan

Breakfast and last sing.

Check out from the hotel and transfer to the Delhi airport to board your flight for onward destination.

Meals: Breakfast

End of Tour and Services



## Costs - Inclusions - Details

### TOUR COST

The tour price is \$7490 AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS. A non-refundable deposit of \$2000 will secure your place. {Please read Terms & Conditions upon booking} Balance is due 3 months prior to departure.

The Single supplement to secure a single room is \$2000 AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS, payable with final balance payment 3 months before departure.

### INCLUSIONS

- Ongoing singing workshops with Sue Johnson and Anubrato Ghatak
- Professionally stage managed concert in Rishikesh.
- School workshop in the Thar Desert.
- Evening experience with Rajasthani Gypsies.
- Integrated singing experience into the program.
- Four domestic airline flights.
- Expert commentary on Indian culture and traditions.
- Accommodation on Double / Twin occupancy for 15 nights.
- Meals as mentioned in itinerary.
- All transfers, excursion & sightseeing by using AC Large Coach and auto rickshaw during the Rishikesh drives.
- English Speaking Guide as per the itinerary and our TBI staff locally to coordinate.
- Monument entrance Fees during sightseeing with guide including Baba Bagh, Jain Temple, Beatles Ashram and any others.
- River Ganges rafting experience.
- Houseboat on Ganges in Varanasi
- Services of TBI's representatives at Airports.
- All currently applicable taxes including Government Service Tax.

### EXCLUSIONS

- Laundry bills, telephone calls, tips, table drinks etc.
- Alcohol
- Travel insurance, visa etc.
- Camera fees – still & video.
- Any other expense which is not mentioned in inclusions.
- International Airfares.



## PHILOSOPHY

All Blue Swan programs commence with a settled period of time in one place to prepare our repertoire. We have 5 nights in mystical Jaisalmer with that firmly in mind. The idea is to have our songs ready to go for Goa and Rishikesh before we leave, allowing us to refine and develop repertoire on the road.

## STARTING POINTS & TRAVEL OPTIONS

Singing India starts in Delhi at the Raddison Blu Marina at 2pm on the January 13th -2024, and finishes after breakfast on the Sunday 28th of January from the same hotel.

Upon booking I will forward you the contact details of the TBi travel agent if you would like to come earlier or later. She may be able to suggest itineraries that include the Taj Mahal which we have chosen not to visit.

The jet lag issue with India is not huge, but if you were choosing to spend some extra time I would suggest you go earlier to acclimatise. Our program will be pretty intense.

## OUR AGENTS

In a complex environment such as India, it is vital to have a reliable and trustworthy travel partner. In TRAIL BLAZERS INDIA -TBi - we have all that and more. Trail Blazer Tours India Pvt Ltd are pioneers in the travel and tourism industry who began their involvement in travel and tourism as far back as 1925, when Jeena and Company (established in 1900) diversified into the travel field with Jeena Tours and Travels, the first Indian - owned travel company.

Today, TBi, as it is popularly known, has 270 professionals operating from 9 locations in India and an international presence in Australia, Brazil, Germany, Hong Kong, Mexico, Spain, UK, South Korea and China through its representatives who work closely with local tour operators and destination management companies.

TBi's focus is on Destination Management, Group and Individual Tours, Corporate Travel and International Vacations.

Besides all that they completely "get" what we are trying to achieve. We have a powerful industry player behind us ensuring we have clout in all our dealings along the supply train.



## ACCOMMODATION

The choice of hotels was absolutely vital to the design of the Indian project. We needed to balance comfort and reliable cuisine with a hotel that was close enough to the action for people to walk to cafes in an area where they could feel safe. We also wanted character and a great space in which to rehearse. I am completely satisfied that the painstaking research has yielded brilliant hotels.

## FLIGHTS

We have chosen to fly rather than use road links between cities. Road travel is exhausting and extremely slow in most cases. Hence we fly from Delhi to Jaisalmer, Jaisalmer to Goa, Goa to Rishikesh, Rishikesh back to Delhi. All flights are included in the tour.

The maximum baggage allowance is 15kgs for checked luggage and 7Kg for carry-on. While excess baggage is available it is expensive and a time consuming to process at the airport. My suggestion is to stay within the limits for ease of air travel.

## FOOD REQUIREMENTS

India, with all its different religions, is quite practised at designing meals for specific dietary requirements. My initial investigations suggest that vegan and gluten-free can be catered for. We have decided to control the food story within hotels and/or known restaurants so as to ensure the quality.

With such a complex trip, with so many moving parts, we are concentrating on offering tasty, nutritious and clean food, rather than a culinary tour of India. Our story is about singing and connection to India, and will not be about fine dining.



## MONEY

I will send notes later about having a supply of Indian currency in small denominations before we commence the tour. ATMs in India are notoriously unreliable, and can take hours out of the day. We want to streamline everything so we remove timely distractions.

## CLOTHING AND WHAT TO BRING

A list will be forwarded to you months from departure.

## WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

We ask that you bring the best part of yourself. Most travel experiences provide a list of answers. The outcome is known. SINGING INDIA asks questions: what can we achieve; how can we connect to Indian people; what will the gigs be like; how can we meld into the soundscape of India. We are by nature a creative touring entity who are travelling to India to give as much as to receive. That requires bold, intelligent and gutsy people able to step up to the creative plate and deliver.

## FILMING & RECORDING

Without any concrete plans to film SINGING INDIA, the possibility exist to film and record the concerts and general tour environment. Generally, SoundTracks creates a video of the tour which is distributed to participants, and might also be used online. You can see some of the recorded concerts and films at COOL VIDEOS - [www.blueswan.events/cool-videos](http://www.blueswan.events/cool-videos) where you can check out BACKROADERS VIDEOS and SINGING TO THE HEART.

Recorded performances can be listened to at GIG MUSIC - [www.blueswan.events/gig-audio-recordings](http://www.blueswan.events/gig-audio-recordings).

Your booking is on the conditions that you recognise that the event may be filmed and recorded. Choristers see this as a positive additional gift as they are given a beautiful visual and recorded memory of the tour.

## VISA

Travel visas to India are available online. It is recommended that you use the government authority - [www.indianvisaonline.gov.in](http://www.indianvisaonline.gov.in)