

## AFO INCREDIBLE INDIA TRIP ITINERARY

The *Aussies for Orphans Incredible India Trip* delivers a truly unique travel experience and amazing value for money. We think we've struck the perfect balance between sightseeing, socialising and sitting around doing absolutely nothing, with the opportunity to really immerse yourself in India's fascinating culture and make a real connection with the people of this incredible land. A range of activities and excursions are included in the trip price with some evening meals and extra activities/excursions on offer at an additional extra cost (as indicated with an asterisk\*). All are optional though and it's totally up to you to pick and choose from the wide and wonderful choice of things to do, places to go and people to meet depending on how you feel on the day.

Let the journey begin!

### Day 1 Wednesday December 27<sup>th</sup> 2017 - Australia to India travel

Depart Australia just after 9am, arriving at Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi at 7:45pm the same day to be met by one of our fun and fabulous Trip Leaders, Joanne, Diptesh or Puja. Airport transfer and check-in at The Claridges Hotel, one of New Delhi's most historical hotels. Here, you'll find yourself surrounded by a classic blend of colonial charm and experience the best in Indian hospitality. Unpack and rest. Overnight at The Claridges Hotel.



### Day 2 Thursday December 28<sup>th</sup> – Delhi

Late breakfast followed by an Indian head and shoulder massage\*. We then travel across town to meet the children of The Brighter Futures Study Centre (BFSC). Next is a downright hilarious dance class directed by Bollywood choreographer Mridulaya Singh Maddy (we're assuming here you're as bad at Bollywood dance moves as we are!). Costumes provided with styling by the girls from the BFSC. Traditional thali for lunch before a fun-filled photo shoot in our Bollywood getup. Then it's time to sit back and enjoy a special dance performance by the children just to show you how it's really done. After gifting the kids with some much needed school supplies we head back to the hotel to rest for a while before our Welcome Dinner at the tranquil Lodi Garden open air restaurant\*. Overnight at The Claridges Hotel.

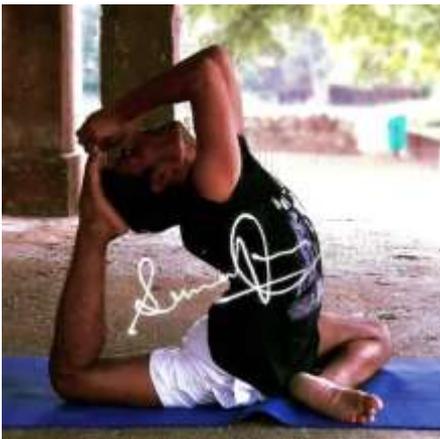


### Day 3 Friday December 29<sup>th</sup> – Delhi

Yoga and meditation class with renowned teacher Suman Kumar, followed by a relaxing breakfast. First up today is a guided tour of Delhi including a cycle rickshaw tour around Old Delhi Market, the historic quarter and symbolic heart of New Delhi founded in 1639 by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. Experience all the colour and excitement of this incredible bazaar, home to hundreds of stalls in winding alleyways once visited by merchants from Turkey, China and Europe three centuries ago.

Then it's onto some must see sights including the iconic India Gate, Red Fort (the main residence of the emperors of the Mughal dynasty until 1857), Jama Mosque (the largest mosque in India) and Lal Mandir (the oldest and best-known Jain temple in Delhi).

Rest back at the hotel before travelling across town to the amazing Akshardham Temple, entirely constructed from Rajasthani pink sandstone and Italian marble. Here we go on a journey through 5,000 years of Indian history on a boat ride and watch a musical laser light show centred around the fabulous temple fountain. Vegetarian dinner at Akshardham Temple\*. Overnight at The Claridges Hotel.



*"The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page."*

*~ Saint Augustine ~*

### Day 4 Saturday December 30<sup>th</sup> - Delhi to Jodhpur, Rajasthan

Lazy breakfast before heading to Delhi Airport for our flight to Jodhpur. Experience all the colour and magic of the 'The Blue City' enjoying time to explore the bustling, medieval laneways of the Old City and Sadar Bazaar around Jodhpur's famous clock tower where you'll have plenty of time to wander the markets and grab a bite to eat. We then continue onto Mehrangarh Fort, one of the most magnificent forts in India situated four hundred feet above Jodhpur's skyline. So colossal are the proportions of this 1,000 year old building that Rudyard Kipling called it 'the work of giants'.

It's then onto the fairy-tale that is Umaid Bhawan Palace perched high on Chittar Hill for a frosty beverage overlooking the historical Blue City, vast sand dunes and Mehrangarh Fort before a one hour coach ride to Roher Garh, our 375 year-old desert oasis for the next two days, located on the banks of a small lake teeming with birdlife and home to one of the finest kitchens in India. Enjoy the best in traditional Rajasthani cuisine in the hotel's beautiful restaurant. Overnight at Roher Garh Hotel.



*"A journey is best measured in friends, rather than miles."*

*~ Tim Cahill ~*

## Day 5 Sunday December 31<sup>st</sup> – Jodhpur

Enjoy breakfast Rohet Garh style before departing on a very special village safari. Showcasing the best this region has to offer, you will see abundant wildlife and be welcomed into the home of the local people, giving you a rare insight into the traditional Rajasthani way of life.

Chill out by the pool and try spotting a dancing peacock, or experience riding a magnificent Marwari horse\* (the indigenous horse of the Thar Desert), attend a culinary workshop\* or treat yourself to a right royal picnic\* by the lake where delectable hot dishes are served up on tables with crisp linen and a bottle of wine, before you drift into sweet slumber watching the pied kingfisher dive for his lunch just yards away from you. Relax for a few hours before glamping up for the Rohet Garh New Year's Eve Gala Dinner in the beautiful grounds of the hotel. Overnight at Rohet Garh Hotel.



## Day 6 Monday January 1<sup>st</sup> 2018 - Winds Desert Camp, Rajasthan

New Year's Day brunch before a road trip on the AFO Fun Bus to the Golden City of Jaisalmer in the Northwest of Rajasthan (be sure to have at least a few of your favourite Karaoke hits up your sleeve for this road trip!). Built from yellow sandstone and enriched by the warmth of the local Jain community, Jaisalmer is filled with intricately carved temples and a romantic ambience like nowhere else. Own time to explore, or enjoy a change of fare at Jaisal Italy\* nestled atop Jaisalmer Fort's boundary wall. Luxury coach transfer to the Golden Fort, one of the largest fully preserved fortified cities in the world and the beautiful brocaded mansion that is Patwon-Ki-Haveli.

Onward to Winds Desert Camp in The Great Thar Desert amid 200,000 square km of undulating sand dunes accumulated over thousands of years. Arrive by 4 o'clock to settle into your elegantly decorated luxury tent before a buffet dinner in the open air restaurant, traditional folk music and campfire under the stars. Overnight at Winds Desert Camp.



## Day 7 Tuesday January 2<sup>nd</sup> - Winds Desert Camp

Sunrise camel safari\* or meditation class before breakfast overlooking the sand dunes. Own time to relax at camp, go dirt biking\* or visit a nearby village\* to meet the locals and shop for traditional handicrafts. Rest back at camp before an unforgettable camel safari as the full moon rises. Overnight at Winds Desert Camp.



*"I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move".*

*~ Robert Louis Stevenson ~*

## Day 8 Wednesday January 3<sup>rd</sup> - Jaisalmer to Jaipur, Rajasthan

Breakfast at camp followed by a road trip back to Jodhpur and connecting flight to Jaipur. Known as the 'Paris of India' for its glamour, colour and energy, Jaipur is also famous for its massive Rajput forts, opulent palaces and some of the best shopping in the world.

Hotel check-in before discovering Jaipur in your own time. Relax back at the hotel then rug up for a superb view of 'The Pink City' from Nahargarh Fort. Onward to the Amber Fort Sound and Light Show, a truly magical experience under the stars that brings to life the history of this 600 year-old royal fort. Own dinner, or join us at Surabhi Restaurant and Turban Museum\*, one of Jaipur's best kept secrets nestled in the alleyways of central Jaipur. Overnight at The Grand Uniara Hotel.



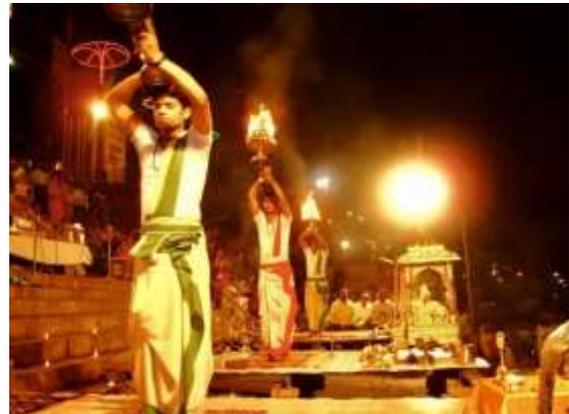
*"If there is one place on the face of earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India".*

*~ Romain Rolland ~*

## Day 9 Thursday January 4<sup>th</sup> - Jaipur to Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

Late checkout before hitting the road on the AFO Fun Bus bound for Delhi to catch our connecting flight to the holy city of Varanasi. Previously known as the "City of Light" or "Kashi", Varanasi is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world and famous for the mighty Ganges River. In Hinduism 'The Ganga' is considered sacred and worshipped by Hindus who believe that bathing in the river causes the remission of sins and facilitates Moksha (liberation from the cycle of birth and death).

From the airport we head straight to the banks of the "Holy Ganga River" to experience Varanasi's answer to the Italian gondola and witness a spectacular arti fire ceremony from the best vantage point on the river. Feel all the wonder and romance of this mystical city as ancient rituals incorporating brass lamps and hypnotic Sanskrit chants unfold in front of your eyes. Boat ride to our hotel for check-in. Own time or join us for a rooftop dinner by candlelight at the hotel. Overnight at WH Jukaso Ganges Hotel.



*"The city illuminates truth and reveals reality. It does not bring new wonders into the scope of vision, but enables one to see what is already there. Where this eternal light intersects the earth, it is known as Kashi."*

*~ Diana L. Eck ~*

## Day 10 Friday January 5<sup>th</sup> – Varanasi

Early start for a boat ride that will leave an enduring imprint on your heart and mind as we witness the beauty, ceremony and faith that the Indian people have in The Ganges. Sadhus and pilgrims alike bathe and perform prayers revealing the unparalleled spiritual significance of this auspicious river. Own time or coffee at Terracotta Café\* run by Byron Shire boy and barista extraordinaire, Matt Brice followed by a sacred puja (Hindu prayer ritual) staged especially for us by fifty young Brahmin priests under the guidance of senior priest and friend of AFO, Brijesh Tiwari.

After gifting the boys for their trouble it's time to wander Varanasi at your leisure, experience a Vedic astrology reading\*, partake in an Indian cooking class\* or head to the beautiful Krishnamurti Study Centre\* set on the banks on the river. Here you will get an insight into the teachings of the late Jiddu Krishnamurti, (one of India's most revered philosophers), engage in thought provoking discussion with other guests over lunch and visit the centre's community project in nearby Rajghat Village.

Relax back at the hotel before an early evening walking tour through narrow alleyways to Manikarnika Ghat where the flames of funeral pyres have been burning for some 3,000 years and up to 300 people are cremated every day. Hindus believe that the most sacred place on earth to die is by The Ganges in Varanasi. Here, as we witness from a distance a cremation ceremony, Diptesh translates a talk by Brijesh about why in the Hindu religion the burning of the body is not to be looked upon as a sad event, but as a new beginning.

We continue our walking tour to Diptesh's family home for a delicious meal and live classical music, enjoying the warmest of Indian hospitality and a new found appreciation for the simple fact of being alive. Overnight at WH Jukaso Ganges Hotel.



## Day 11 Saturday January 6<sup>th</sup> - Varanasi

Take a morning stroll along The Ganges, or start the day with a meditation and 'Introduction to Indian Philosophy' class with Sannyasin (Hindu ascetic) and friend of AFO, Rittam Kashi. Breakfast followed by a magical mystery rickshaw tour of Varanasi, including a visit to the proposed site for the Varanasi Destiny Performing Arts Academy and Vishwanath Temple within the grounds of Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Spanning 1,300 acres and home to 20,000 students, BHU is one of the largest residential Universities in Asia and counts many great freedom fighters, renowned scholars, artists and scientists amongst its old scholars.

Relax back at the hotel or head to Sparsa Day Spa\* to experience the ancient customs and rituals of Ayurveda. Choose from a bevy of traditional therapies on offer including a four-handed full body Abhyanga massage using warm herbal oil (two therapists, not a four-handed masseur you'll be pleased to know), or try the luxurious Shirodhara - a deeply relaxing treatment involving the continuous application of warm oil to the 'third eye' with a heavenly head massage.

Own time, or experience the rhythmic clicketing of looms that fill the narrow streets of Varanasi as you are drawn into cosy shops tucked into weathered buildings on a fascinating shopping tour\*. Once you enter the maze of streets there's no coming back without at least a few glittery saris, the best quality pashmina shawl or a piece of beautifully handcrafted brassware at a ridiculous price.

Catch a Bollywood movie\* or travel across the river with us for sunset cocktails at Ramnagar Fort. Built in the Mughal style in 1750, this commanding sandstone fort also houses an eccentric museum containing vintage American cars, jewel-encrusted sedan chairs and an impressive ancient weaponry collection. Own dinner, or join us for a party at Terracotta Café. Overnight at WH Jukaso Ganges Hotel.



## Day 12 Sunday January 7<sup>th</sup> - Varanasi to Agra, Uttar Pradesh

Lazy morning before our flight to Agra to see the magnificent Taj Mahal - the mausoleum built by the Mughal ruler Shah Jahan's wife, Mumtaz Mahal who died in childbirth in 1631. On arrival we visit Agra Fort, the main residence of the emperors of the Mughal Dynasty until 1638 before checking into The Grand Imperial Hotel. Relax at the hotel before enjoying a champagne cocktail in the Moonlight Garden of Mehtab Bagh for the best view of the Taj as the sun sets. We then head to the must see Mohabbat Taj Show which tells the timeless love story of Emperor Shajahan through traditional dance and dramatic lighting. Own time, or join us at the one and only Oberoi Amarvilas for a late dinner\* overlooking the Taj Mahal at night. Overnight at the Grand Imperial Hotel.



*"Rahul had wondered how someone could love their beloved so much that their dedication to them became one of the wonders of the world."*

*~ Faraaz Kazi ~*

## Day 13 Monday January 8<sup>th</sup> - Agra to Delhi

Early start to witness the Taj in all its glory as the sun rises, sipping a cup of freshly brewed chai. It's then off to meet one of Agra's most knowledgeable local guides just as the gates open to hear of the lasting love story and incredible feats of engineering behind this man-made wonder of the world. Rooftop brunch\* overlooking the Taj before visiting Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity for orphaned and abandoned children to drop off some much needed food, books and clothing. We then head to the station to catch a train back to Delhi and transfer to The Claridges Hotel via an Ambassador taxi, the iconic symbol of power and prestige from the British Raj era. Relax before 'the last supper' at Amore Rooftop Restaurant & Bar in the hip and happening Hauz Khas Village. Overnight at The Claridges Hotel.



*"It's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving."*

*~ Mother Teresa ~*

## Day 14 Tuesday January 9<sup>th</sup> - Delhi and onward travel

Breakfast together and late checkout before paying our respects to the great Mahatma Gandhi. We visit Raj Ghat memorial which marks the spot of Gandhi's cremation in 1948 and Gandhi Smriti - the house where Gandhi spent his last 144 days. Its then back to Sanjay Lake in East Delhi for a game of cricket with the children and presentation of the AFO Incredible India Trip donation. Freshen up for high tea\* or a cheeky G&T at The Claridges Hotel before our evening flight back to Australia/onward travel.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YerRGSysM8o>

