TOUR CODE

IA6

ADVENTURESABROAD

SOUTHERN INDIA

with North Extension

17 days

Updated 18/01/2013

Day 1 *Arrival in Delhi*

Arrive in Delhi and transfer to our hotel.

Overnight in Delhi. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Delhi: City Tour*

Today we have a full-day tour of Delhi. We start with a drive north into Old Delhi, passing along the Rajpath (King's Way) and stopping for photos at the India Gate. The 42m high India Gate, an "Arc de Triomphe"-like archway in the middle of a crossroad, commemorates the Indian soldiers who lost their lives fighting for the British Army during WWI. This landmark also bears the names of British and Indian soldiers killed in the Northwestern frontier in the Afghan War of 1919.

Next we will make a visit to the Jamma Mosque. Located in the heart of Old Delhi, the largest mosque in India can accommodate as many as twenty-thousand worshippers. This imposing architectural monument, with it's three gateways and two minarets, took fourteen years to complete (1644-58). Time permitting we will enter to have a brief look inside.

From here we board our cycle rickshaws for a tour of Chandni Chowk (Silver Street). Here we are given a glimpse into an old world lifestyle slowly fading from Delhi. The hustle and bustle of everyday life can be felt in the Chandi Chowk's narrow lanes. We will reboard our bus after the rickshaw ride, going past the Red Fort (photo stop), and we disembark at the Raj Ghat, set within a beautiful park. This national monument is where the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, was cremated.

After a stop for lunch we continue our sightseeing with a visit to Humayan's Tomb, an excellent example of Mughal architecture, predating the Taj Mahal by almost 100 years. Persian in style, this is a beautiful red sandstone building inlaid with black and white marble.

We will finish our day with a visit to the Qutub Minar. Few other monuments are as closely identified with Delhi as the Qutub Minar, this first monument of Muslim rule in India. It heralded the beginning of a new style of art and architecture which came to be know as the Indo-Islamic.

Overnight in Delhi. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Delhi - Gwalior*

After an early breakfast at the hotel, transfer to the Railway Station to board the Shatabdi Express train to Gwalior. We are met on arrival and transfer to the hotel.

This afternoon we visit the Gwalior Fort. The fort's walls and buildings were constructed by different generations of

rulers. The most notable are the Suraj Kund, a tank built in the 8th century AD, two 11th century temples known as Sas Bahu ka Mandir, dedicated to Vishnu; the 16th century Gujri Mahal Palace and the Hindola Gate, which houses a small archeological museum. Later visit Jai Vilas Palace and Museum, located in the city. The enormous Jai Vilas Palace, built in the 19th century, has a pair of the world's heaviest chandeliers in the Durbar Hall and a crystal staircase. The dining table is fitted with an electric train made of silver, which carried brandy and cigars around the table after dinner.

Overnight in Gwalior. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Gwalior - Jhansi - Orchha*

After breakfast, transfer to the railway station to board the Shatabdi Express train (01:10) to Jhansi. On arrival in Jhansi we are met and transferred to Orchha, a 30-minute drive.

In the afternoon we visit Orchha. Founded in the 16th century by the Bundela king, Rudhra Pratap, on the banks of the Betwa River, Orchha is a medieval city frozen in time and space, existing even today as it must have done in the 16th and 17th centuries, when it was built. The countryside undulates gently between riverine plains and rolling forest-clad hills and the landscape is dotted with palaces and temples, a fortress and cenotaphs. The architecture is a synthesis of traditional Hindu, hybrid Indo-Saracenic and ornate Mughal. One of the finest sights is the view of the cenotaphs from across the Betwa River. We visit the Jehangir Mahal, the most grandiose structure in Orchha; the Raja Mahal Rai Praveen Mahal.

Overnight in Orchha. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Orchha - Khajuraho*

After breakfast we drive to Khajuraho, renowned for its fine temples.

In the afternoon we visit the temples. Built between 950 and 1050 AD, they are among the most creative examples of Indian architecture. Only 22 of the original 85 temples survive today. The most popular theme is woman: reflective, playful, and amorous. The carvings also depict gods in cosmic evolution, griffins, nymphs, beasts, demons in revolt and the several emotions of man -- fear, doubt, jealousy, ardent love and consummate passion.

The western group, contained within a fenced enclosure, is well-maintained as a park. The large Lakshmana Temple is dedicated to Vishnu and is one of the earliest of the western enclosure temples, dating from 930-950 AD. It is also one of the best preserved, with a full five-part floor plan and four subsidiary shrines. The Vahara Temple, dedicated to Vishnu's boar incarnation (Vahara avatar) faces the Matangesvara Temple and has a huge solid and intricately carved figure of the boar incarnation, dating from around 900 AD. The Kandariya Mahadev Temple is not only the largest but also artistically and architecturally the most perfect. Build between 1025 and 1050 AD; it represents Chandela at its finest. The Mahadeva Temple is small and mainly ruined. However, it houses one of Khajuraho’s best sculptures -- a fine sardula figure caressing a lion. The Devi Jagadamba Temple was probably originally dedicated to Vishnu, but later changed to Parvati and then Kali. The Chitragupta Temple is unique in being dedicated to the Sun God, Surya. The Matangesvara Temple, standing next to the Lakshmana Temple, is not within the fenced enclose, because it is still in everyday use, unlike all the old temples.

Overnight in Khajuraho. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Khajuraho - Varanasi & Sarnath*

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast at the hotel. Late morning transfer to the airport for the flight to Varanasi.

This afternoon we visit Sarnath. Located 9 km from Varanasi, it the centre of the Buddhist world, just as Varanasi is that for the Hindu. It was here that Buddha preached his first sermon, partially recorded on one of its stones. Dhamek Stupa dating back to 500 AD, is the largest with geometrical ornaments on its wall. Dharmarajika Stupa was set up by emperor Ashoka to contain the bodily relics of the Buddha.

Later in the evening, watch the spectacular aarti (religious ceremony) when thousands of butter lamps are lit and set afloat on the sacred Ganges Return to the hotel for the night.

Overnight in Varanasi. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Varanasi Touring - Mumbai*

Before sunrise we take a boat ride on the sacred Ganges River, where devout Hindus can be seen performing their daily ablutions. The bathing ghats, over 5 km in length, lead down from a steep bank to the river, are the soul of the city. Return to the hotel for breakfast.

Later we walk through an inextricable maze of small streets and alleyways, hiding in disorderly array no less than 2,000 temples and shrines. Domes, pinnacles, towers and derelict 18th-century palaces dominate the left bank of the Ganges River. The streets are noisy, colour is rife. Varanasi is the religious capital of the Hindu faith since the dawn of history. Known as Kashi in the 7th century BC it constitutes a microcosm of Indian life. No one knows how old it really is -- when Buddha came here in 550 BC, it was already a flourishing ancient settlement. Visit some of the more important temples such as the Bharat Mata Mandir and the Durga Temple. Go past the beautiful Tulsi Manas temple. Take a walk down Vishwanathji Ki Gali -- the ancient alley which is home to some beautiful temples. Here you will find shops that sell every conceivable item required in a temple.

Afternoon transfer to the airport for your flight to Mumbai.

Overnight in Mumbai. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Mumbai - Goa*

Today we fly to the former Portuguese enclave of Goa.

Goa achieved fame when Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama sailed down the Malabar Coast in 1498 in search of "Christians and spices." Although he found neither, Goa became a Portuguese colony separated from the rest of India by the jungle covered hills of the Western Ghats. Goa's heartland and population is located in the alluvial strip inland from the beaches, a lush patchwork of paddy fields, coconut plantations, whitewashed churches and gently meandering rivers.

Overnight in Goa. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Goa Tour*

This morning we include a sightseeing tour of Panjim. Proceeding to old Goa, we visit the Basilica of Bom Jesus, built in 1605 by the Jesuit fathers and still the most important church in Goa. Enshrined in a silver casket in one of its chapels, is the body of Saint Francis Xavier. Across the street is the Se Cathedral with an imposing vaulted roof,

massive pillars and fourteen magnificent altars. Later we visit the Convent of St. Francis D'Assisi and the Chapel of St. Catherine.

This afternoon is free to enjoy this laid-back town.

Overnight in Goa. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Goa - Badami*

Today we travel to Badami, arriving early afternoon.

On arrival we visit Badami. Sculpted out of solid rock, the temples are adorned with dwarfs, an 18-armed Shiva, a Nandi bull, Lord Vishnu and the goddess Durga. The famed Durga Temple represents the blending of southern and northern styles of architecture.

Overnight in Badami. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Badami - Aihole - Patadakkal - Hospet*

We travel by road to Hospet.

We make a stop at Aihole. The seventy temples at Aihole exemplify Hindu medieval art. The Durga temple with its pyramidal roof has some remarkable sculpture, and the Jain Meguti temple is composed of 630 small stone blocks.

We also visit Patadakkal, the place where the Chalukuan kings had their coronation ceremonies. The ceiling of the Papanath temple, built around 680 AD, has a carved smiling Shiva, appearing to bless with his outstretched palm from whatever direction he is viewed. The Virupaksha Temple is a curious figure -- an elephant on one side and a buffalo on the other.

Continue to Hospet.

Overnight in Hospet. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Hospet - Hampi - Hospet*

After breakfast we depart for a day trip to Hampi, the seat of the famed Vijayanagara Empire, which was the capital of the largest empire in post-Mughal India, covering several states. Although in ruins today, this capital city once boasted riches known far beyond the shores of India. The ruins of Hampi of the 14th Century lies scattered in about 26 sq. km area, amidst giant boulders and vegetation. Protected by the tempestuous river Tungabhadra in the north and rocky granite ridges on the other three sides, the ruins silently narrate the story of grandeur splendour and fabulous wealth. The splendid remains of palaces and gateways of the broken city tell a tale of man's infinite talent and power of creativity together with his capacity for senseless destruction.

Return to Hospet.

Overnight in Hospet. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Hospet - Hassan*

After an early breakfast, depart on the long but interesting drive through rural Karnataka to Hassan. Upon arrival check-in at the hotel.

Overnight in Hassan. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Hassan: Belur & Halebid*

Today we visit Belur and Halebid.

Belur and Halebid were both capitals of The Medieval Hoysala kings who built the exquisitely carved temples in the 12th & 13th centuries. Belur is famous for it Hoysala architecture; its Temple of Lord Channakeshava is embellished with carving which has few equals in the world. It took 103 years to complete and you can see why. The facade of the temple is filled with intricate sculptures and friezes with no portion left blank: elephants, episodes from the epics, and sensuous dancers.

Halebid was the seat of Hoysala Kingdom; its great Hoyaleswara Temple was built in the typical Hoysala style. The temple, dating back to the 12th century, is astounding for its wealth of sculptural details. The walls of the temple are covered with an endless variety of gods and goddesses, animals, birds and dancing girls. Yet no two facets of the temple are the same. This magnificent temple -- guarded by a Nandi Bull -- was never completed, despite 86 years of labour.

We return to Hassan.

Overnight in Hassan. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 15 *Hassan - Mysore*

This morning we travel to Mysore, arriving around midday.

In the afternoon we explore Mysore, famous for its silk and sandalwood, as well as its numerous palaces, well laid out boulevards and beautiful parks. The Maharaja's Palace is the most impressive of Mysore's ochre-coloured buildings -- a modern edifice built in 1897, where the oriental decorative imagination runs wild. One of the largest palaces in India, it is a gigantic synthesis of Hindu and Muslim styles. The royal family's private chambers, including the impressive Durbar Hall, are open to the public. The Marriage Hall has life-like paintings of the Dassera procession and in the museum is the ruler's golden elephant throne, used during festivities. Chamundi Hill lies 10 km from Mysore and is named after Chanduswari, the consort of Lord Shiva and the patron goddess of the royal family of Mysore. On the way up is a colossal figure of Nandi, carved out of a single rock in 1659. The view from the top of the hill is superb.

Overnight in Mysore. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 16 *Mysore - Bangalore: City Tour*

Today we travel by road to Bangalore, the cosmopolitan capital of Karnataka.

Bangalore is called the Garden City for it's delicate blossoms and greenery that impart a unique beauty to this lovely city. The weather is the city's best feature, with pleasant summers and bearable winters. Bangalore, which literally

means the 'town of baked beans', was founded by Kempe Gowda, a chieftain of the Vijayanagar Empire, around the 16th century. He built four towers in four directions to specify its boundaries.

On arrival we tour Bangalore, visiting the Lal Bagh Botanical Gardens, which has a variety of old trees, fountains, lotus pools, terraces and an assortment of tropical herbs and subtropical herbs. We also see the government buildings and the Maharaja's Palace.

Overnight in Bangalore. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 17 *Departure*

Departure from Bangalore.

BON VOYAGE! Meal plan: Breakfast.