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EXPERIENCE MATTERS

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**Get Global Expeditions (GGEx)**

## *From Brahma to Buddha*

A Fortnight on the Indian Subcontinent

March 1 – 14, 2008

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*Global Learning Across Borders (Global LAB) is pleased to invite you on this spring 2008 Get Global Expeditions (GGEx) journey to India. Currently the world's largest democracy and a rising economic powerhouse, India is a land so vast and steeped in so much rich and intriguing history that one could literally spend a lifetime exploring its many cultures, spiritual traditions, and geographies, from the Himalayas bordering Tibet to the southern lowlands just above Sri Lanka. Designed specifically for adults and inspired by Global LAB's experiential education programs for students, this expedition will feature exclusive introductions to fascinating people and places well off the typical tourist track.*

On this two week tour to North India, we will focus on experiencing some of the most remarkable cultural, religious, and historical highlights to be found in the country, including visits to the legendary Taj Mahal; a stay in the holy city of Varanasi, an ancient yet still thriving pilgrimage site for all Hindus; an excursion to Bodhgaya, where the Buddha meditated sitting under a Bodhi tree, attained enlightenment, and set forth to found the religion we know as Buddhism; and Khajurahu, a complex of medieval Hindu and Jain temples that has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In addition we will explore both Old and New Delhi, enjoy fine hotels and excellent cuisine, and benefit from the cultural expertise and outstanding company of tour leaders Galen Murton and Namgial Rinchen, whose clients include The Smithsonian Institution and National Geographic Society among others. To maintain an intimate group size required for this kind of highly customized itinerary, the tour will be limited to the first 16 registrants.

**Days 1 → 2 (March 1-2)**  
**USA/New Delhi**

International flight from USA to New Delhi. Travelers will fly independently to New Delhi, meet John Eastman, Galen Murton, Namgial Rinchen, or a hotel representative at Indira Gandhi international airport, and transfer to the Sheraton, Oberoi, or Taj Palace Hotel for the evening (hotel to be determined).

### **Day 3 (March 3)** **New Delhi**

We will have a morning orientation at our hotel in Delhi before commencing our explorations of the main cultural and historical sites of New and Old Delhi. This will include visits to historical monuments, and examples of classical Mughal architecture, such as Old Delhi's Red Fort and Jama Masjid (the largest mosque in all of India). We will also have a chance to explore the nearby Chandni Chowk bazaar, one of the most colorful open public markets in the city, as well as Raj Ghat, the memorial site and eternal flame for Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaralal Nehru, and Indira Gandhi. In the late afternoon, participants will have the option of resting back at the hotel, visiting some of New Delhi's capital district and museums, and/or shopping. We will retire early after this exciting first day in order to rest-up for tomorrow's early departure.

### **Day 4 (March 4)** **Agra**

Today we will journey south from Delhi to the city of Agra, home to one of India's architectural masterpieces, the legendary Taj Mahal (also known as the 'Resplendent, Immortal Teardrop on the Cheek of Time'). We will travel to Agra by 1<sup>st</sup> Class A/C Express Train or by Private Coach, and drop our bags at the Mughal Sheraton upon arrival. We'll take our first afternoon to explore some of Agra's other attractions, including the lost city of Fatehpur Sikri and the Agra Fort. That evening, if possible, we will have an evening viewing of the Taj Mahal. Again, it will be early to bed before tomorrow's early wake-up for sunrise at the Taj.

### **Days 5-6 (March 5-6)** **Khajuraho**

We will rise by 5 AM and make our way, before first light, to the Taj Mahal in order to catch the pink sunrise on Shah Jahan's monument/mausoleum of eternal love. Following our morning experience at the Taj and after breakfast, we will continue to the local airport and fly to Khajuraho in the mid-afternoon. We will then transfer to the Hotel Chandela and have the late afternoon and evening free for rest and individual exploration of this small town of historical significance.

Our second day will be spent exploring the legendary architectural and sculpture complexes of the Khajuraho temples. This city of brilliant Hindu stonework was built primarily from 950-1050 CE by the Chandela Dynasty, but fell quickly to the Mughal onslaught from Central Asia at the turn of the second millennium. Today, the beautiful wonders which remain are matched by the question of why it was built in the first place. Whatever the answer, the remote location of the Khajuraho temples certainly benefited its preservation, and to this day the ancient exotica and erotica of the Hindu relief is awe inspiring. This day, March 6, is also the holiday of Shivaratri, "Shiva's Great Night," one of the holiest days in the entire Hindu calendar which commemorates Lord Shiva's marriage to the goddess Parvati as well as the anniversary of his performance of the *Tandava Nritya*, the primordial dance of creation, preservation, and destruction. We can expect to see many fascinating forms of worship and celebration this night in Khajuraho.

## **Days 7-9 (March 7-9)**

### **Varanasi (Banaras)**

Following our time in Khajuraho, we will fly eastward to the ancient City of Light, Varanasi, perhaps the oldest city in the world. Also one of the holiest and densest cities in all of India, Varanasi, also known as Banaras, is Lord Shiva's home on earth as well as the sacred city on the Ganges River to where faithful Hindus make their final pilgrimage (death and cremation in Varanasi bestows *moksha*, or liberation, upon the deceased). Upon our arrival at the Hotel Taj Ganges or Ganges View Hotel (to be determined), we will have an orientation and walking tour of the gulis and ghats of Varanasi's Old City along the Ganges river.

The next morning, we will awake early in order to take a sunrise boat-ride along the Ganges River, seeing the morning prayers and Varanasi tradition of daily ablutions and submersions in the great river known as 'Mother Ganga.' In the late morning and early afternoon we will have the chance to visit some of the orphan schools and widow ashrams where Global LAB's American semester students have volunteered during their study abroad programs. In the late afternoon we will have the opportunity to be joined by Banaras Hindu University Professor Rana-ji Singh, friend to Global LAB and foremost expert on the sacred geography of Varanasi, for his famous slideshow on the living traditions of pilgrimage and worship in the City of Light.

The prior night's slideshow and lecture will be but a prelude to an exceptional excursion on our third day here, a pilgrimage of the outer, sacred circuit of Varanasi, known as the Panchkroshi Yatra, with Professor Rana-ji himself. It will be a day-long event, primarily by A/C taxi (we will cover nearly 100 kilometers) along the perimeter of the city, visiting many of the most sacred temples and power places of this city which defies time. We will then have an evening concert of traditional Indian music at our hotel or another nearby venue to conclude the day.

## **Day 10 (March 10)**

### **Sarnath**

Today we will step away from the Hindu traditions of Varanasi and instead explore the Buddhist heritage of the region, making a day trip to Sarnath. This is where, in the Deer Park, the Buddha first gave teachings on the middle way path to nirvana, a philosophy which soon came to be known as Buddhism. Sarnath is also where some of the greatest universities of Buddhist learning were established in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium, and today there remain extensive ruins and archaeological monuments to this legacy. There are also dozens of monasteries and temples from Buddhist nations throughout the world, as well as an excellent museum to explore for the remainder of the day. We will return to Varanasi in the evening and again stay at our hotel.

## **Days 11-12 (March 11-12)**

### **Bodhgaya**

This morning we will say farewell to Varanasi and take a private coach or 1<sup>st</sup> class A/C train to Bodhgaya, the Diamond Throne and seat of Buddhism. For here, under the Bodhi Tree in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, a Hindu prince named Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment and set out to teach the world about the path to liberation which he had realized. Behind the Mahabodhi

Temple here in Bodhgaya, at the very site where the Buddha himself sat 26 centuries ago, stands a descendent of that original tree. We will have the opportunity to circumambulate the Temple with hundreds, if not thousands, of Buddhist pilgrims from nations across the world, as well as sit under the canopy of the tree in meditation and peace. Finally, we will also be able to visit temples and monasteries from the Tibetan, Zen, Thai, Burmese, and other respective Buddhist traditions. During our time in Bodhgaya we will stay at the Royal Residency or Mahayana Hotel.

On our second day we will explore some of the other legendary Buddhist sites in the area around Bodhgaya. These include Rajgir, the ancient hilltop capital of the Magadha kingdom, historical pilgrimage place for Hindus, and location of some of the Buddha's foremost teachings. In the early afternoon we will also visit the ruins of Nalanda, the 5<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist college which was one of the ancient world's greatest universities. This center of learning and debate generated much of the most brilliant thought that still today comprises the core of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy. Walking the same paths which the Indian saint Nagarjuna wandered while formulating his ideas on emptiness as well as visiting the library ruins which once housed the writings of Kamalashila and Shantideva, we will follow in the thousands of footsteps from orange robed monastics of millennia ago. We will return to Bodhgaya and our hotel for the evening.

### **Days 13-14 (March 13-14)**

#### **New Delhi**

This morning we will depart Bodhgaya and make the 2-3 hour drive to Patna for a quick flight back to Delhi. Upon arrival in Delhi we will transfer to our hotel and have some downtime in the evening before dinner at an outdoor restaurant in a quiet district of the city.

Our last day in India will be generally open as a free day in Delhi, with ample time provided for shopping. There will also be the opportunity to visit other points of interest, such as museums and temples, and/or traditional handicraft centers. We will have a final dinner together before most participants transfer to the airport for their night flight back to the USA.

*\*\*\*Please note this itinerary is subject to change\*\*\**

#### **Tariff**

**\$4,895** (based on double occupancy accommodations at 5-star or best available hotels, all meals during program, all in-country air travel and ground transportation, all entrance fees at museums and cultural sites, tour leader throughout, local guides, & guest lecturers). *Alcoholic beverages and international airfare are not included.*

For more information or to request a registration form, please contact:

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