

**Carleton College Alumni Adventure
With Religion Professor Roger Jackson
October 14–November 5, 2009**

Day 01: Wednesday, 14 October: Departure from U.S.

Day 02: Thursday, 15 October: Enroute

Day 03: Friday, 16 October: Arrive Delhi early a.m.
Transfer to Hotel Taj Ambassador (or similar).

Visit Connaught Place, National Museum, Humayun's tomb, Qutub Minar, and a Hindu temple for evening *arati*.

Connaught Place – At the hub of the British-built city of New Delhi, India's capital, Connaught Place is a lively center for commerce, hotels, restaurants, and culture.

National Museum, New Delhi – This museum holds over 200,000 works of art, both of Indian and foreign origin covering more than 5,000 years of cultural heritage. It includes collections of archaeology, jewelry, paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, manuscripts, Central Asian antiquities, arms and armor, etc..

Humayun's Tomb (UNESCO World Heritage Site; see below) – Humayun, the second Mughal emperor, is buried in this tomb, the first great example of Mughal garden tomb architecture and a model for the Taj Mahal. It was built in 1565 by the Persian architect Miraq Mirza Ghiyas.



Qutab Minar (UNESCO World Heritage Site) – The Qutab Minar towers over the historic area where Qutabuddin Aibak laid the foundation of Delhi Sultanate in 1193. He built the Quwatul Islam Mosque and

the Qutab Minar to announce the advent of the Muslim sultans. Later Iltutmish, Alauddin Khilji and Ferozshah Tuglak added new buildings and new architectural styles.

Evening: Visit a Hindu Temple and witness the basic ritual of *arti*.

Overnight – Hotel Taj Ambassador.

Day 04: Saturday, 17 October: Delhi

Visit Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Jain Temple, Rajghat

Red Fort (UNESCO World Heritage Site) – Red sandstone battlements give this imperial citadel the name Red Fort (Lal Quila). Commissioned by the Mughal emperor Shahjahan in 1639, it took nine years to build and was the seat of Mughal Power until 1857, when the last emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar was dethroned and exiled. India's independence was proclaimed from atop its walls by Jawaharlal Nehru on August 15, 1947.

Jama Masjid – This Grand Mosque, built in 1656 by the emperor Shahjahan on a natural rocky outcrop, took six years and 5000 workmen to construct at the cost of nearly a million rupees. The gigantic courtyard accommodates up to 20,000 people at prayer times; it is especially crowded during Friday prayers and on important festival days.

Raj Ghat — India's most potent symbol of patriotism is the site of Mahatma Gandhi's cremation. A somber black granite platform inscribed with his last words "He Ram" ("Oh God") now stands here.

Chandini Chowk – A colorful and labyrinthine market in Old Delhi, with wares from all over the world.

Overnight – Hotel Taj Ambassador.

Day 05: Sunday, 18 October: Delhi

Visit Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, Bahai Temple, Akshardham Temple, Aurobindo Ashram.

Gurudwara Bangla Sahib – Situated near the center of the city, this important Sikh shrine, believed to be blessed by the healing powers of the Eighth Guru, Harkrishan Sahib, and the Tenth Guru, Gobind Singh.

Bahai Temple (see below) – Shaped like a half-opened lotus flower, this modern temple is made of marble, cement, dolomite and sand. The lotus is an ancient Indian symbol of purity. The Bahai faith, which originated in Persia in the nineteenth century, is now a universal religion, whose teachings and temples are open to worshippers of any tradition.



Akshardham Temple (see below) – This beautiful modern Hindu *mandir*, built without steel, consists of 234 ornately carved pillars, nine domes, twenty crowning *shikhars*, a plinth of stone elephants, and 20,000 images of India's great ascetics, devotees, scholars, and deities. Akshardham was created by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who belonged to the spiritual lineage of the god Swaminarayan. Erected over five years, the temple required three hundred million man hours of labor by 11,000 volunteers, ascetics, and artisans.



Aurobindo Ashram – Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950) was one of modern India’s great poets, philosophers, yogis, and social experimenters. Early in life he was revolutionary in Bengal, but after his imprisonment by the British he turned to spirituality, and developed a system known as Integral Yoga, which combined Indian yogic techniques with western notions of science and evolution. He founded a world-famous ashram at Pondicherry in south India and a utopian community known as Auroville. The ashram is an oasis of tranquility in the hubbub of modern New Delhi.

Overnight – Hotel Taj Ambassador.

Day 06: Monday, 19 October: Delhi

Train to Amritsar by Shatabdi express dep. 0720 hrs/arr.1315 hrs. Transfer to hotel Ritz Plaza.

Overnight – Hotel Ritz Plaza.

Day 07: Tuesday, 20 October: Amritsar

After breakfast visit Golden Temple.

GOLDEN TEMPLE (see below) – The holiest shrine of the Sikh religion is in the center of the old part of Amritsar. The temple is surrounded by a tranquil pool which gave the town its name (“Nectar Sea”). The temple is built of the finest marble. Marble signifies purity and is believed to have a soothing effect on pilgrims. The temple precincts include pilgrim hostels, a free kitchen, and a Sikh museum. The temple itself has as its centerpiece a copy of the Sikh holy text, the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Overnight – Ritz Plaza.



Day 08: Wednesday, 21 October: Amritsar/Kurukshetra/Delhi.

Train to Kurukshetra by Amritsar–Delhi Express departing at 0625 hrs/arriving Kurukshetra at 11:30 hrs.

Kurukshetra – The “field of King Kuru” is the site of the cataclysmic eighteen-day battle that is the culmination of the great Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*. It was at the outset of this battle that the great warrior Arjuna paused in his chariot and refused to fight against his kinsmen and teachers. The ensuing dialogue between him and his charioteer, the god Krishna, has come down to us as perhaps the most beloved of Hindu texts, the *Bhagavad Gita*.

After sightseeing, 3–hour drive back to Delhi.

Overnight – Hotel Taj Ambassador.

Day 09: Thursday, 22 October: Delhi/Patna/Bodhgaya.

Fly to Patna by IC 409 dep. 0630 hrs/arr. 0755 hrs.

Drive to Bodhgaya; enroute visit Nalanda/Rajgir.

Nalanda – This Buddhist monastic university was one of the educational institutions of the ancient world. Established early in the first millennium, it remained a live center of learning till the late 12th century, when it was depopulated in the wake of Muslim invasions. Monks came from all over Buddhist Asia to study there, and its faculty included some of the great names in Buddhist philosophy. It became especially well-known through the writings of Xuanzang, the Chinese translator-monk (and protagonist of the Chinese classic *The Journey to the West*), who visited in the seventh century.

Rajgir – This ancient site includes a bamboo grove where the Buddha and his disciples supposedly lived; a tank where the Buddha used to bathe; an orchard presented to the Buddha by the physician Jivaka; the Vulture Peak from which the Buddha delivered some of his profoundest sermons; and the cave where the First Buddhist Council was convened after the Buddha’s final nirvana. The site also includes a World Peace Stupa, built by members of the Japanese Nichiren sect.

Transfer to Hotel Mahayana (or similar).

Day 10: Friday, 23 October: Bodhgaya

Visit Mahabodhi and other temples.

The Mahabodhi Temple (UNESCO World Heritage Site) – Situated adjacent to the spot where, some 2500 years ago, the Buddha attained enlightenment, this temple dates to the mid-first-millennium. Behind the temple are the “diamond seat” and Bodhi tree (*ficus religiosa*). The present tree is a direct descendent of the tree under which the Buddha sat on the night of his awakening. This is the holiest site in the Buddhist world, visited by pilgrims from Asia and the West throughout the year. We also will visit other sites in Bodh Gaya, including Tibetan, Bhutanese, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, and other temples, and an eighty-foot Buddha statue erected by a Japanese group in the 1980s.

Day 11: Saturday, 24 October: Bodhgaya/Varanasi

Morning: Free time for further exploration of temples/sites in Bodh Gaya.

After-lunch departure, transfer to railway station in time for train to Varanasi by Doon Express dep. 1500 hrs/arr. 1835 hrs. Transfer to Hotel Taj Ganges (or similar).

Overnight – Hotel Taj Ganges (or similar).

Day 12: Sunday, 25 October: Varanasi

Visit *ghats* by boat and inland sites.

Varanasi (see below) – This is probably the holiest single site in the Hindu world. Set on the banks of the river Ganges between tributaries known as the Varuna and the Asi (hence its name), it also is known as Kashi (“Divine Light”) because in some legends the universe is created and destroyed here. It has been inhabited for close to three thousand years, and teems with life as only a pilgrim town can. It is especially sacred to the god Shiva, but also is home to countless temples and shrines to other Hindu deities, and contains sites important to other traditions as well. We will take a boat ride on the Ganges at dawn, observe the great Manikarnika cremation *ghat*, wander through the alleyways known as *Banarsi gullees*, visit important temples, and see Benares Hindu University.



Evening – Arti on Ganges.

Overnight – Taj Ganges (or similar).

Day 13: Monday, 26 October: Varanasi

Day trip to Sarnath, site of the Buddha’s first teaching.

SARNATH (proposed as an UNESCO World Heritage Site) – Five miles north of Varanasi is Sarnath, where in the Deer Park the Buddha delivered his first sermon some weeks after his enlightenment in Bodh Gaya. Second only to Bodh Gaya as an important pilgrimage place for Buddhists, Sarnath contains a large and tranquil archeological park that contains an inscribed pillar commissioned by the great Buddhist emperor Asoka (3rd c. BCE), the remains of a stupa commemorating the Buddha's first sermon, a modern temple with fine murals depicting the Buddha's life, and an excellent archeological museum. Sarnath also is home to the Tibetan Institute, which provides modern and traditional education to Tibetan exiles; we will visit the institute and meet with professors there.

Overnight – Taj Ganges (or similar).

Day 14: Tuesday, 27 October: Varanasi/Khajuraho

After-breakfast departure, transfer to airport in time for flight to Khajuraho by 9W 723 dep. 1220 hrs/arr. 1300 hrs.

After lunch, visit temples.

KHAJURAHO (UNESCO World Heritage Site; see below) – The city was once the capital of the Chandela Rajputs, a Hindu dynasty that ruled north-central India from the 10th to the 12th centuries. The Khajuraho temples were built over a span of a hundred years, from 950 to 1050. There were originally over eighty Hindu temples, of which only twenty-two now stand in a reasonable state of preservation, scattered over an area of about eight square miles. There also are a few Jain temples. The Khajuraho temples are among the masterpieces of north Indian temple architecture and contain some of the finest sculpture ever produced on the subcontinent, including carvings of deities, saints, kings, courtesans, and couples in ecstatic sexual embrace.



Overnight – Taj Chandela or similar.

Day 15: Wednesday, 28 October: Khajuraho/Jhansi/Agra

Free time in morning for further visits to temples.

After lunch drive to Jhansi in time for train to Agra by Shatabdi Express dep. 1810 hrs/arr. 2045 hrs.

Transfer to Hotel Trident (or similar).

Day 16: Thursday, 29 October: Agra

Sunrise visit to Taj Mahal.

TAJ MAHAL (UNESCO World Heritage Site; see below) – One of the wonders of the world, this mausoleum of pure white marble was built by the emperor Shahjahan in memory of his beloved consort, Mumtaz Mahal. Construction began in 1631 and was not completed until 1653. Twenty thousand people worked on the building. The Taj is considered as the finest example of Mughal architecture, a style that combines elements from Persian, Turkish, Indian and Islamic architectural styles.



After breakfast, visit Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri.

AGRA FORT – This great compound was the political and cultural center of the Mughal empire, founded in 1526. Erected as a fort by the emperor Akbar in the sixteenth century, the fort grew over succeeding generations, until it became the complex of battlements, palaces, and gardens that it is today.

FATEHPUR SIKRI (UNESCO World Heritage Site) – This served briefly as the capital city of Akbar. Its beautiful sandstone edifices bear mute testimony to the high culture that once flourished here. It also

contains the tomb of Sheikh Salim Chisti, an important Sufi master; this is an important pilgrimage site for Indian Muslims.

Overnight – Hotel Trident.

Day 17: Friday, 30 October: Agra/Mathura/Vrindavana/Bharatpur.

Travel from Agra to Bharatpur via Mathura and Vrindavana.

Mathura – This city on the Yamuna River is an ancient cultural center—some of India's earliest sculptures were produced here—but it is most celebrated as the birthplace of the god Krishna, the eighth avatar of the preserver god Vishnu. Krishna was born to kill the evil king of Kamsa of Mathura, who would have killed him had he not been spirited away to Vrindavana. Eventually, Krishna returned to slay Kamsa and restore order to the kingdom. Mathura is a major pilgrimage place for Hindus from every part of India, full of temples and the sights and sounds of Krishna-devotion.

Vrindavan – Across the Yamuna is Vrindavana, site of an ancient forest where Krishna spent his childhood and adolescence. In Vrindavana, Krishna fought against demons and gods and flirted with the milkmaids of the region, the *gopis*, who come to be regarded as the ideal devotees. Krishna special favorite among the *gopis* was Radha, who comes to be regarded as his consort. Vrindavana includes many hundreds of temples dedicated to the worship of Krishna and Radha, and is considered sacred by a great many Hindus, especially those who worship Vishnu.

Govardhan – This place of Hindu pilgrimage is located near Vrindavana on a long and narrow sandstone hill known as Giriraj. The young Lord Krishna is said to have held Giriraj up on the tip of a finger for seven days and nights to shield the people of Vrindavana from the deluge of rain sent down by the god Indra.

Overnight – Hotel The Bagh, Bharatpur.

Day 18: Saturday, 31 October: Bharatpur to Pushkar.

After early breakfast, drive to Pushkar (6 hours), arriving late afternoon.

Overnight – Raj Resorts (Deluxe Tents).

Day 19: Sunday, 01 November: Pushkar

Full-day visit to Pushkar and environs

Pushkar (see below) – Located in the center of the desert state of Rajasthan, Pushkar is said to be one of the oldest cities in India. The date of its actual founding is not known, but legend associates its beginnings with the creator god Brahma. It contains a sacred lake, many *ghats*, and one of the few Brahma temples in the world. It is a center of Rajasthani culture and Hindu pilgrimage, especially during the annual *mela* or festival that has come to be known as the Camel Fair.

Overnight – Raj Resorts (Deluxe Tents).



Day 20: Monday, 02 November: Pushkar

Full day at Pushkar fair.

The Pushkar Fair – Also known as the Camel Fair, this annual festival commemorates the victory of the creator god Brahma over a demon who had killed his children. Brahma slew the demon with a lotus, which then fell to earth and created the Pushkar lake. Brahma's performance of a sacrifice by that lake is commemorated by the Fair. The fair attracts thousands of Hindus from all over Rajasthan and India to its temples and lakes, and involves a vast array of cultural attractions, including camel and cattle races, livestock displays, markets, cricket matches, food stalls, and performances of music and dance. This will be a unique opportunity experience a traditional Indian *mela*, with its inimitable mixture of the sacred and secular.

Overnight – Raj Resorts (Deluxe tents).

Day 21: Tuesday, 03 November: Pushkar/Ajmer/Delhi

After breakfast, drive from Pushkar to Ajmer.

Ajmer – This beautiful city, surrounded by the spectacular Aravali Mountains, was founded by Prithviraj Chauhan in the seventh century. Here we will visit the *dargah* (tomb) of the Sufi Saint, Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, who came to Ajmer from Persia in 1192. It is one of the most important pilgrimage places in the South Asian Muslim world.

Train to Delhi by Shatabdi Express dep. 1550 hrs/arr. 2240 hrs)

Overnight – Taj Ambassador (or similar)

Day 22: Wednesday, 04 November: Delhi

Full day free to explore on your own, go shopping, or relax.

Farewell dinner in the evening

Day 23: Thursday, 05 November: Depart Delhi