

THE SPIRITUALITY & SPECTACLE OF A LIVING RELIGION

GANESH FESTIVAL & SACRED INDIA TOUR 2008

SEPTEMBER 1-15, 2008

Our journey begins in Mumbai (Bombay), the epicenter of the annual Ganesh Festival which honors the elephant-headed Hindu deity Ganesh, known as the Remover of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings and Patron of the Arts. The Ganesh Festival is without a doubt one of the most important and flamboyant religious festivals celebrated throughout India. In 2008, for 12 days, the citizens of Mumbai will celebrate Ganesh with a palpable sense of deep devotion, sanctity and fervor second to none! While ecstatic outbreaks of song and dance and explosions of colored powder spontaneously burst out in the streets, quiet family rituals are performed in small groups throughout the city. At the end of the festival a monumental procession of Ganesh statues up to 35 feet high are paraded through Mumbai. Their final destination is the Arabian Sea where thousands of Ganesh statues are immersed – bringing the festival full circle.

In between the start and finish of the festival, you will travel to the holy city of Varanasi (Benares); nearby Sarnath, where Buddha gave his first teaching; Khajuraho, a UNESCO World Heritage site, known for its ancient temples adorned with erotic sculptures; the Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of world; and the bustling capital city, Delhi.

This tour has been organized by the international tour operator, Celestial Voyagers, and New York based photographer and multimedia producer, Shana Dressler, who has attended the festival annually since 2004 while working on her multimedia project, Discovering Ganesh – www.discoveringganesh.com.

On this incredible fourteen day journey, you'll experience the festival in an intimate way and meet Shana's Mumbai collaborators which no tour company could provide without this unique partnership. This is a perfect trip for people interested in Indian religion, spirituality, culture, the arts, textile design, photography and Bollywood!

TRIP WILL BE OF INTEREST TO:

People who enjoy unique access to cultural experiences, learning about religion and ritual, photography, adventure, and sharing a journey with a community of like-minded travelers.

Package includes:

- First class accommodation
- All travel, including internal flights, in India
- Arrival/departure transfers in air-conditioned vehicles
- Professional English speaking guides
- Entry fees to Taj Mahal, Ganges boat trip, Khajuraho temples, Bollywood studio tour, Mumbai museums and Elephanta caves
- In Mumbai, small groups (4-6 guest) will tour city to see the Ganesh Festival at night
- View of festival finale by boat

What's not included:

- Roundtrip airfare from the US to Mumbai
- Visa charges
- Travel Insurance (highly recommended)
- Meals except where indicated in itinerary
- Personal expenses such as laundry, dry cleaning, telephone calls, etc.
- Undue escalation in fuel prices, new taxes levies on hotels and transportation services



ITINERARY

Subject to change if special opportunities present themselves between now and the departure of the trip (all confirmed travelers will be notified immediately if this occurs)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

Departure: New York (JFK) to Mumbai:
Departure late evening

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2 - MUMBAI

Arrive: Mumbai late evening
Ganesh Tour representative will greet you at the airport and bring you to the hotel

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 - DAY 1 (GANESH CHATURTHI)

- Breakfast: At hotel - morning free
- Afternoon: Visit to Lalbagh studios to view final touches being put on Ganesh Idols; watch idols from 1-35feet being brought to homes and public spaces
- Evening: Visit to public places around Walkeshwar to view the Ganesh puja ceremonies at pandals
- Overnight at the hotel in Mumbai

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4 - DAY 2

- Breakfast: At hotel
- Morning: Excursion to Elephanta Caves
- Afternoon: Shopping tour* followed by view the Ganesh Puja at pandals and first family immersion at Dadar or Juhu Beach
- Evening: Visit to public places around Mumbai to view the Ganesh puja (ritual ceremonies) at pandals (public installations)

* For those interested in buying amazing fabric will go with Shana to silk and brocade shops. Overnight at the hotel in Mumbai

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5 - DAY 3

MUMBAI/VARANASI BY AIR D: 0700 A: 1120 HRS

- Breakfast: At hotel
- Morning: Transfer Mumbai airport to Varanasi, transfer to hotel
- Afternoon: Experience Varanasi intimately while riding through the narrow streets and alleys of this holy city. In the evening participate in an arti ceremony (collective prayer) and watch the floating diyas (lamps) on the Ganges river.
- Overnight at the hotel in Varanasi

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6 - DAY 4

- Early morning visit to Ganges River for boat ride
- Return to hotel for breakfast
- Morning: Excursion of Sarnath (Buddha delivered his first teaching here)
- Overnight at the hotel in Varanasi

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7 - DAY 5

VARANASI to KHAJURAHO BY AIR D: 1220 A: 1300 HRS

- Breakfast: At hotel
- Upon arrival in Khajuraho transfer to hotel
- Afternoon: City tour of Khajuraho visiting Eastern and Western Group of Temples
- Overnight at the hotel in Khajuraho

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 - DAY 6

KKHAJURAHO/JHANSI BY LAND (175 KMS /4.5 HRS DRIVE) & JHANSI/AGRA BY TRAIN (SHATABDI EXPRESS D: 1800 A: 2010 HRS)

- Breakfast: At hotel
- Morning: Proceed to Jhansi railway station by surface visiting Orcha en route
- Afternoon: Jhansi to connect train for Agra, upon arrival in Agra transfer to hotel
- Overnight at the hotel in Agra

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 - DAY 7

- Breakfast: At hotel
- Morning: City tour of Agra visiting Taj Mahal and Agra Fort
- Overnight at the hotel in Agra

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 - DAY 8

AGRA/DELHI BY LAND (205 KMS/4.5 HRS DRIVE)

- Breakfast: At hotel
- Morning: Agra to Delhi
- Afternoon: City tour of New Delhi visiting Qutub Minar, Humayons Tomb
- Overnight at the hotel in Delhi

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 - DAY 9

DELHI/MUMBAI BY AIR D: 4:50PM A: 6:45PM

- Breakfast: At hotel
- Morning: Sightseeing of Old Delhi to visit Jama Masjid, the Red Fort, Chandani Chowk, and Raj Ghat, the cremation place of Mahatma Gandhi and Birla Temple
- Afternoon: Transfer to Delhi airport to connect flight for Mumbai
- Overnight at the hotel in Mumbai

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 - DAY 10

- Breakfast: At hotel
- Morning: City tour of Mumbai to visit Prince of Wales Museum, Mani Bhawan (a house where Gandhi lived while in Mumbai), Gateway of India and drive past Marine Drive.
- Afternoon: Visit to Ganesh Pandals followed by a Indian Bollywood Film in a local theater
- Overnight at the hotel in Mumbai

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 - DAY 11

- Breakfast: At hotel
- Morning: Tour of a Bollywood studio
- Evening: Visit Ganesh Pandals
- Overnight at the hotel in Mumbai

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 - IMMERSION DAY

- Breakfast: At hotel
- Morning: Free for independent activities
- Afternoon: View the procession and immersion of Ganesh Idols into sea at Chowpatty beach; one hour boat trip with H2O boat company
- Farewell Dinner
- After dinner transfer to Mumbai International airport to connect flight for return to the US (you will have access to your room until you leave for the airport)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 (RETURN TO JFK)

Departure: Late Night (Sunday night, but actually early Monday)

Arrival: JFK early morning.

TO BOOK TRIP

The retail price for the tour is \$5325.00 per person based on double occupancy. However, we have negotiated a special price of **\$3,995.00** per person based on double occupancy for the Ganesh Festival Tour 2008.

There is a \$1250.00 supplement for single rooms.

The payment schedule is as follows:

- \$1,000 non-refundable deposit is due by Tuesday, June 3, 2008
- The balance of \$2,995 for double occupancy and \$4245 for single occupancy is due by Friday, July 11, 2008

If you would like to pay for the trip in full, that is fine as well.

Payment types accepted: check or credit card

If you plan to pay by check please send it to:

Leigh Marshall
Celestial Voyagers
79 Watermill Lane
Great Neck, NY 11021

If you plan to pay by credit card over the phone:

- Visa, MC or American Express are accepted
- There will be an additional 3.5% surcharge to cover the

merchant fees.

To reserve your spot you need to do so online go to:

<http://celestialvoyagers.com/html/reservations.htm>

You will need the following information:

Destination: "India"

Tour Name: "Ganesh Festival and Sacred India"

Tour #: 1986

Departure date: September 1, 2008

You do not need to fill in anything for Group Name.

For more information about the trip please contact:

Leigh at Celestial Voyagers:

Email: leigh@celestialvoyagers.com

Phone: 516-829-1525

AIRFARE:

For airfare contact Susy at susy@celestialvoyagers.com for possible group rate out of New York (JFK).

We can offer a special rate if we get 10 passengers on the same flights from New York (JFK) to Mumbai India round trip.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

At Celestial Voyagers, terms are based on contracts with airlines, hotels and other suppliers. The terms and stipulations mentioned below are related to these contracts and will be strictly enforced.

All cancellations must be received in writing.

- \$1000.00 deposit is non refundable
- In case of cancellation prior to July 1st, we will refund 100% of your payment minus your \$1000.00 deposit.
- In case of cancellation between July 1st and July 31st, we shall refund 50% of your payment minus your \$1000.00 deposit.
- For cancellation after July 31st or any "no show" there is no refund.
- Trip cancelation insurance is highly recommended.

Celestial Voyagers and its affiliates in India are not responsible for any loss or extra cost arising due to unforeseen circumstances such as flight delays, or cancellations due to weather or technical problem, etc.

Optional Travel Insurance:

The above policies will be strictly enforced and Celestial Voyagers strongly recommends that you buy a travel insurance package which will cover trip cancellations, medical expenses and baggage loss and/or damage.

In order to cover pre-existing conditions you must buy insurance at the time you pay your deposit.

Please email **Leigh at leigh@celestialvoyagers.com** to inquire about travel insurance or any refund policy listed above.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

- For more information on the Ganesh Festival you can explore **www.discoveringganesh.com** and look at the gallery of photos.
- While guests are in Mumbai, Shana will be working on the video portion of Discovering Ganesh with a small crew. When the tour leaves Mumbai, Shana is planning on joining the group until Khajuraho.
- Opportunities may arise for morning and afternoon trip options in Mumbai with Shana especially for those interested in textiles. If this is a special passion of yours please email Shana and she'll tell you what she's trying to set up (a trip to see a colony of embroiders, for instance).
- The festival occurs at the end of the monsoon which makes the days spent in Mumbai much more pleasant because of the cooling effect of the rain. You will want a light weight, breathable raincoat.
- Though the tour is structured, there will be many opportunities for spontaneous exploration by travelers to take off on their own to shop and have meals in small groups.
- If you end up signing up for the tour, we will send you a list of things you'll want to have during your time in India.

TO OBTAIN A VISA

Contact:

Travisa Outsourcing, Inc.
316 E. 53rd St., 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10022
Phone: (212) 754-9900
Fax: (212) 754-9905
Email: newyork@travisa.com
Website: <https://www.indian-visa.com>

The Consulate General of India, New York:

<http://indiacgny.org/>

