

Shalom India

A Discovery of India & Its Jewish Heritage



Exotic India, with its rich history and Muslim cultures, was also a haven and a home for the Jews for centuries. Trace the steps of some enterprising ancestors who came to India's western shores way back in the 11th century. Explore some of the most ancient and multifaceted Jewish communities that are as old as the Diaspora.

This is a chance to savor some of the most stunning sights of India while also visiting the earliest synagogues that still stand well-preserved by the Jews in India. There are 1600 years old copper plates, gold and silver decorated Torah scrolls, sacred paintings and other relics from the fascinating Jewish past in magnificent synagogues. Travel through the ancient and modern parts of cosmopolitan Mumbai and the alluring backwaters of Kerala. Experience the fascinating lives of Jews who settled in this part of the world - the Bene Israelis, the Jews of Cochin and the Baghdadis.

Day 1: Wednesday, February 16, 2011 - Depart from US
Depart JFK on Air India Flight 140 from JFK at 9:30pm to Mumbai.

Day 2: Thursday, February 17 - Arrive in Mumbai at 10:15pm
On arrival in Mumbai be received at the airport by our representative and transferred to your hotel.
Hotel: Taj Mahal Palace and Towers

Day 3: Friday, February 18 – Mumbai

After breakfast proceed for an excursion to the famous caves at Elephanta Island, a World Heritage Site that dates back to the 7th century, by a chartered boat. The cave temples on Elephanta dedicated to Lord Shiva contain some of the most magnificent sculptures in the Deccan region. The most spectacular is the Maheshmurti panel which depicts Shiva as a creator, protector and destroyer. Shabbat dinner is included at Fort Synagogue where you will meet with the representatives of the Sephardic community.

Hotel: Taj Mahal Palace and Towers

Day 4: Saturday, February 19th – Mumbai

Enjoy the day at leisure attending services or explore the city on your own. Suggested Places to visit are the Prince of Wales Museum which is famous for its collection of paintings or the Gothic buildings of British rule period in the town area. In the evening, enjoy an elegant vegetarian dinner (included). A speaker will be arranged.

Hotel: Taj Mahal Palace and Towers

Day 5: Sunday, February 20th – Konkan

After breakfast visit Navgaon, the original landing site of a group of Jews that were shipwrecked off the coast of Mumbai. This group later came to be known as Bene Israel or "Sabbath Oil pressers". Visit the historic monument, a Bene Israel village and meet with the remaining Bene Israel Jews. Lunch (included) will be at the home of a Bene Israel family. Later visit a unique synagogue at Alibaug and learn the passionate story of this lost community which is located in one of the most remote corners of the Diaspora. In the Evening, enjoy a memorable dinner (included) at the Magen David Synagogue.

Hotel: Taj Mahal Palace and Towers

Day 6: Monday, February 21st – Mumbai to Cochin

After breakfast, proceed for a city tour that includes a visit to Flora Fountain, Hanging Garden, the unique Dhoby Ghat (an open air laundry) and the Queen's Necklace. Enjoy a sumptuous lunch (included) en route. In the afternoon take a flight to Cochin which is known as the Queen of the Arabian Sea because of its beautiful and natural harbor. Cochin is a beautiful sea side city. On arrival in Cochin, be received at the airport by our representative and transferred to your hotel. Enjoy the evening at leisure.

Hotel: Old Harbour Hotel

Day 7: Tuesday, February 22nd – Cochin

A sight seeing tour of Jew town begins shortly after breakfast. This includes a visit to the Portuguese Fort founded in 1503, the Mattanchery Palace and the Synagogue. Meet with members of the Cochin's Jewish Community whose origins date to the 5th century BC when Jews fled biblical Israel after Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem. In the evening, dinner is (included) at Bharat House followed by a beautiful performance of Kathakali dance.

Hotel: Old Harbour Hotel

Day 8: Wednesday, February 23rd – Backwater – Jaipur

Your day begins with a boat ride on the on the backwaters of Cochin harbor, where you will see the Chinese fishing nets. This is an age old technique of catching the fish without disturbing the ecological balance of the ecosystem. This is unlike the modern methods of mass fishing. Later visit the Synagogue in Ernakulam built during the medieval times, one of the local Hindu temples and shop for the local handicrafts and spices. Boxed lunch will be included. Later in the afternoon take a flight to the Pink City, Jaipur. On arrival in Jaipur, be received at the airport by our representative and transferred to your hotel. Enjoy the evening at leisure.

Hotel: Trident Jaipur

Day 9: Thursday, February 24th – Jaipur

After breakfast in the morning, enjoy a city tour. Visit the Hawa Mahal (Wind Palace) from where the palace women would discreetly observe the activities of the bustling bazaar below without being seen themselves. Proceed to Amber (pronounced Aamer) Fort. Ride up the fort's ramparts atop a bejeweled Elephant. The fort originally built in the 16th century by Maharaja Man Singh encloses superb palaces and a beautiful temple in marble dedicated to the fearsome goddess Kali. In the afternoon, visit the City Palace Museum which contains elaborate costumes, magnificent armory and intricate carved weapons. Visit Jantar Mantar (Observatory) nearby built in 1728. Jaipur is a shopper's paradise with shops full of handmade jewellery, ceramics and exquisite handicrafts. Enjoy the evening at leisure.

Hotel: Trident Jaipur

Day 10: Friday, February 25th – Jaipur – Agra

In the morning after breakfast, drive to Agra. En route, enjoy lunch (included). Later visit the Imperial Ghost town of Fatehpur Sikri. The erstwhile capital of Emperor Akbar, Fatehpur Sikri is a beautiful example of Mughal architecture. Continue to Agra. On arrival check into the hotel. In the evening enjoy a Shabbat dinner (included) at the hotel.

Hotel: Trident Agra

Day 11: Saturday, February 26th – Agra – Day at leisure

Enjoy a full day at leisure to attend the services and / or explore the city on your own – including a visit to Taj Mahal, one of the wonders of the world. In the evening enjoy a vegetarian feast (included) at the famous Dasaprakash.

Hotel: Trident Agra

Day 12: Sunday, February 27th – Agra – Delhi

Before breakfast, visit the Taj Mahal. After breakfast, visit the Agra fort. After lunch (included) at Zorba the Buddha Café (mentioned by New York Times) drive to Delhi with a rest stop at Miriam's Tomb. On arrival in Delhi, check into your hotel. At dinner (included), you will meet historian Ezekiel Malekar, Director of the Delhi Judah Hyam Synagogue. He will talk about the history of the Jews of India.

Hotel: Oberoi Maidens

Day 13: Monday, February 28th – Delhi

The capital city of India is famous for its museums and beautiful Hindu temples. Visit the age old markets in the narrow roads of the Old Delhi area and Red Fort, Gandhi Memorial, the Parliament, The Presidential Palace and recite Kaddish at the tomb of

Sarmad, Jewish patron saint of Indian poets and intellectuals. Enjoy a delicious farewell dinner. Transfer to the NEW Delhi International airport for your flight home.

Day 15: Tuesday, February 29th

Depart Delhi on Air India Flight 101 at 12:25am

Arrive JFK at 6:00am.

Return home with long lasting rewarding memories of India.

Inclusions:

- All accommodation
- Daily buffet breakfast
- Five lunches and eight dinners during the tour
- Special programs with Jewish communities in Mumbai, Cochin and New Delhi
- Sight seeing and cultural events by a chartered coach with English speaking guide
- Chartered sight seeing boats in Mumbai and Cochin
- Domestic flight tickets for travel within India
- Group transfers by chartered coach with English speaking representative to meet and assist.
- All hotel taxes, service charge and portage
- Passport wallet, baggage tags and India Guide books.