

The Return of Those Dam Rotarians
India - Oct. 2024

Mar 12, 2024



Since 2010, Rotary Dream Teams have assembled from around the world to work on Water Conservation Projects in the heart of India to increase groundwater levels in arid areas.



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Dam 2014 – our 4th dam!

The fitness level of a normally active person is all we need to enjoy the construction work.



Dam 2019 – our 10th dam!

Prior experience is not required, as we work with local foremen and workers.



This was our 2019 project, completed and seen here just after the Monsoon rains in July that year. The retained water seeps down through the Earth's layers to raise the groundwater table in this area, in-time to boost crop production over a 10 sq. km area from the very next year - for many decades ahead!

Check-dams, once built, require little or no maintenance or recurring costs. Yet, with one masterstroke, these projects strike at the core facets of social deprivation: Sustainable Incomes, Sanitation & Health, Education & Equal Opportunity.

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Centuries of failed crops had crushed the local people's will to participate in projects for the general good of their communities. Our hands-on participation, as well as the success of these projects, is changing this defeatist perception.



Each Dam has a cascading effect on the well-being of communities. Improvement in Health, Literacy, and Education among women & children has followed economic growth.

Project Benefits

➤ Higher Groundwater Table	➤ Recharge defunct wells within each village
➤ Improved crop yield	➤ Less time for women to fetch water from distant wells
➤ Healthier livestock	➤ Time for gainful employment of women - more income
➤ Increased family income	➤ Children complete school – no need to start earning

Join us in Nov. 2024 to build our 14th Dam!

Construction Funded by the Rotary Foundation under Global Grant # 2461343

With Contributions from Rotary Clubs and Districts in USA

Name of the beneficiary villages:	Jodhawas and Bhangdoli
District and State	Alwar, Rajasthan
Population	884
Number of Households	142
Agricultural Land	572 hectares
Number of wells & borewells	8
Number of Milch Animals	1650
Dimensions of the proposed check dam (feet)	200 (L) X 7 (W) X 7 (H)
Water Holding Capacity – cubic feet	10,08,000

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Your Hosts



PDG Elias Thomas
International Project Lead
RC Sanford-Springvale
D 7780 - Maine, USA



Past Pres. Sanjiv Saran
Project Manager
RC Delhi Megapolis
D 3011 – New Delhi, India



PDG Judith Henderson
Grant Contributions Director
Mount Morgan Rotary Club
D 9570 - Australia

Rotarians Elias and Sanjiv first got together on a Rotary Polio mission in 2001. They rekindled their friendship in 2003 when Elias led a Rotary Group Study Exchange Team to India and again in February 2004, when Elias led his first team of Rotarians to India to participate in the National Immunization Day against Polio. In Dec. 2004, a Tsunami struck India's southern coastline and wiped out hundreds of homes. The two Rotarians got into action right away. Sanjiv worked on ways to provide the most effective help, and Elias worked on fund contributions.

Elias led the first Rotary Dream Team to assist with tsunami relief when the Rotarians participated in constructing an orphanage. Elias continued his efforts of raising funds, along with Sanjiv's daughter, Pallavi, and by the end of 2005, their appeal raised \$140,000 from Rotarians worldwide to build new homes for the homeless. They collaborated with the Governor of Pondicherry and the venerable Parmarth Ashram of Rishikesh, delivering a colony of 100 permanent houses by April 2006.

A team of about 20 Rotarian volunteers joined Elias and Sanjiv to work with their hands on the construction project. **Rotarian Judith Henderson** was part of the Australian team in the construction work. The hands-on involvement of so many Rotarians profoundly impacted the "shell-shocked" local fishermen. They felt encouraged to move past their personal tragedies and gather to work for the common good. Every year since then, Elias and Sanjiv have worked together to raise funds for such projects and **linked these projects with the hands-on involvement of Rotarians.**

In 2009, PRID Sushil Gupta spoke to Sanjiv about the importance of building a network of check-dams across India to increase groundwater levels. Elias and Sanjiv organized the Rotary Dream Team in 2010 to construct their first Dam at Teenchwala in Rajasthan. They haven't stopped since. Back in Australia, as District Foundation Chair, **PDG Judith Henderson** noticed the ongoing Dam projects in India for their clear, long-standing impact and minimal recurring expenditure. Her assessment was confirmed when she joined the Rotary Dream Teams at the construction sites in successive years. Ever since, she has been a tireless crusader for contributions to the Global Grants for these projects.

Thirteen Dams and fourteen years later, Elias, Sanjiv, and Judith are still at it. Come join them in November 2024!

Read the Trip details below and send your application form to damteams@gmail.com

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Main Trip

The Dam Project

Trip Cost: US \$ 1681

(cost inclusions are listed on the last pages)

ate	Itinerary: Project Only
Wed Nov 13	Arrive in New Delhi, India . Try to select your international flight to arrive in New Delhi after 1 PM today to avoid an extra night supplement. Met on arrival and transfer to hotel.
Thu Nov 14	Delhi: City Tours of New Delhi and Old Delhi. (Optional: If you have visited Delhi before, we will provide a personalized special interest tour, or you may choose to rest and recuperate from the long flight.)
Fri Nov 15	Delhi—Dam Site: Drive about 228 km. 5 hr. to our Dam site, which is in Jodhawas, Bhangdoli, Thanagazi, district Alwar in Rajasthan.
Sat Nov 16 – Mon Nov 18	Work at the Dam site.
Tue Nov 19	Dam Site – Delhi: Drive about 228 km. 6 hr. to Delhi. Optional Shopping. PM: Farewell Dinner with Indian Rotarians.
Wed Nov 20	Delhi – Homeward Flights. AM: Visit a Rotary Project in Delhi. PM: Transfer from the hotel to the airport.

Extension A: Pre-Project Trip

The Taj Mahal & Jaipur

Trip Cost US\$ 857

(cost inclusions are listed on the last pages)

Date	Itinerary: Pre-Project Trip.
Sun Nov 10	Arrive in New Delhi, India . You will be met on arrival and transferred to the hotel. Please try to select your international flight to arrive in New Delhi after 1 PM today to avoid an extra night's hotel supplement.
Mon Nov 11	Delhi: City Tours of New Delhi & Old Delhi.
Tue Nov 12	Delhi—Agra: Drive about 225 km. 4 hr. to Agra. PM: In the afternoon, explore the Taj Mahal.
Wed Nov 13	Agra - Jaipur: AM: Explore Agra Fort. PM: Drive about 265 km. 5 hr. to Jaipur
Thu Nov 14	Jaipur: City Tours
Fri Nov 15	Jaipur – Dam Site: Drive about 90 km. 2.3 hr. to our Dam site.

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Extension B: Post Project

Adventure in the Himalayan Foothills

Trip Cost US\$ 1117

(cost inclusions are listed on the last pages)

Date	Itinerary
Wed Nov 20	Delhi - Haridwar: (Train Shatabdi Exp). Dep. At 06:45 AM/Arr. in Haridwar at 11:33 AM: AM: Transfer to the railway station to board the train to Haridwar. Met on arrival and drive about two hr. to our tented cottages on the River Ganges at Shivpuri. Afternoon at Leisure.
Thu Nov 21	Shivpuri: Early morning trek in the hills to view magnificent Himalayan peaks. Afternoon kayaking on a calm stretch of the river.
Fri Nov 22	Shivpuri - Rishikesh: White water rafting on the Ganges. (No previous experience required. For anyone not keen on rafting, our coach will be available to drive down to Rishikesh). 3-4 hour rafting trip along a pristine 25 km stretch of the Ganges, with 10-12 exciting but easily negotiable rapids in the care of world-class experts. Join the evening Arti on the Ganges. Overnight at the hotel.
Sat Nov 23	Haridwar – Delhi: (Train Shatabdi Exp. Dep. 6:05 PM / Arr. 10:50 PM in Delhi): AM: Explore Rishikesh and Haridwar. PM: Drive to Haridwar railway station to board the train to Delhi. The train departs Haridwar at 6:04 PM. Arrive in Delhi at 10:50 PM: Met on arrival and transfer to hotel.
Sun Nov 24	Delhi – Homeward Flights: AM: At leisure. PM: Transfer from the hotel to the airport.

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Extension C: Post Project

Kerala

Cost US \$ 1980

(cost inclusions are listed on the last pages)

Date	Itinerary: Extension C: Post Project Trip to Kerala Backwater:
Wed Nov 20	DELHI – COCHIN: (Flight AI 831, Dep. At 11:20 AM / Arr. Cochin at 2:35 PM) AM: Transfer from hotel to airport to board the flight for Cochin. Met on arrival and transfer to hotel. Rest day at leisure.
Thu Nov 21	Cochin: AM: & PM: Explore Cochin. Evening Kathakali Dance program.
Fri Nov 22	Cochin – Kumarakom: (Drive 1.5 Hr.) AM: Drive to Kumarakom. PM: Backwaters Motor boat ride for 1-2 hr.
Sat Nov 23	Kumarakom – Allepey – Kumarakom: Cruise the backwaters around Allepey for about 4 hr. PM: Return to Kumarakom. Overnight at the hotel.
Sun Nov 24	Kumarakom – Munnar: (Drive 165./ 5 hr.) AM: Drive about 5 hr. to Munnar. PM: At leisure for optional walks in the hills or Tea plantations, etc.
Mon Nov 25	Munnar: Explore Munnar and Surroundings
Tue Nov 26	Munnar – Madurai: Drive 160 Km / 4hr. to Madura. AM: Drive to Madurai. PM: Visit Meenakshi Amman Temple, Palace and Gandhi Museum.
Wed Nov 27	MADURAI - DELHI: Flight Indigo 6E 2088, Dep: 09:20 AM / Arr. Delhi at 12:30 PM: AM: Transfer to the airport to board the flight to Delhi. PM: Met on arrival and explore Delhi. Late in the evening, transfer to the airport to board your homeward flight early morning on Nov 28, 2024 Note: Hotel accommodation in Delhi from Nov 27-28 (1 night) is not included in the attached price. Based on your international flight departure time, if you require a hotel for this night, we will arrange it at an additional cost.
Thu Nov 28	Delhi – Homeward Flights:

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Extension D: Post Project

Bhutan

Cost US \$ 2901

(cost inclusions are listed on the last pages)

Date	Itinerary: Extension D: Post-Project Trip to Bhutan:
Wed Nov 20	<p>DELHI – PARO: (Flight KB 201, Dep. 12:30 PM: / Arr. 3:20 PM): Paro – Thimphu: (Drive, 60 Km./ 1 hr.): AM: Transfer to the airport to board the flight for Paro. On arrival at Paro airport and after completion of airport formalities, you will be met by our representative (guide). Drive Apx. 60 km. 1 hr. to Thimphu, the modern capital town of Bhutan, and an exciting blend of tradition and modernity. Overnight at Hotel in Thimphu.</p>
Thus Nov 21	<p>Thimphu: AM & PM: Tour of Thimphu. Visit the impressive Trashicho Dzong (fortress), the Buddha Dordenma statue, Gagyel Lhundrup Weaving Centre, Memorial Chorten, Zorig Chosum, and the National Library. Overnight at Hotel in Thimphu.</p>
Fri Nov 22	<p>Thimphu—Gangtey Valley: AM: Drive Approx. 130 km. 4 hr. to Gangtey. PM: Visit the 16th-century Gangtey Goempa Monastery, perched on a hill above the valley floor. Overnight at hotel in Gangtey.</p>
Sat Nov 23	<p>Gangtey – Punakha Valley: (Drive, 130 Km./ 4 hr.): AM: Drive to Punakha. On arrival, visit Chhimi Lhakhang (temple), a 30-40-minute gradual walk through a village and paddy fields. Later, visit Punakha Dzong (fortress), which is strategically built at the junction of the Pho Chu (male) and Mo Chu (female) rivers. Overnight at Hotel in Punakha</p>
Sun Nov 24	<p>Punakha: Explore Punakha Valley. Visit the Sangchen Dorji Lhendrup Nunnery, the picturesque villages of Talo or Nobgang, and the Nalanda Monastery. Overnight at Hotel in Punakha.</p>
Mon Nov 25	<p>Punakha – Paro: (Drive, 130 Km./ 4 hr.): After breakfast, proceed to Paro, crossing the Dochu la Pass. In Paro, visit Kichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest temples in the country, and the National Museum. Overnight at Hotel in Paro.</p>
Tue Nov 26	<p>Paro: Tiger’s Nest Hike (Total hike time 4-5 hrs.) Tiger’s Nest” monastery, the most famous of Bhutan’s monasteries, is spectacularly located on the side of a cliff 900m above the valley floor. End the day with a visit to a farmhouse to share a cup of traditional butter tea with the family. Overnight at Hotel in Paro</p>
Wed Nov 27	<p>PARO – DELHI: (Flight KB 200, Dep. 09:40 AM / Arr. Delhi at 11:30 AM) AM: Transfer to the airport to board the flight to Delhi. Met on arrival and explore Delhi. Late in the evening, transfer to the airport to board your homeward flight early morning on Nov 28. Note: Hotel accommodation in Delhi from Nov 27-28 (1 night) is not included in the attached price. Based on your international flight departure time, if you require a hotel for this night, we will arrange it at an additional cost.</p>
Thu Nov 28	<p>Delhi – Homeward Flights.</p>

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Trip Costs In US\$ Per Person

	Main Trip Dam Project	Extension A: Pre-Trip: The Taj Mahal & Jaipur	Extension B: Post Project Himalayan Foothills Adventure	Extension C: Post Project Kerala	Extension D: Post Project Bhutan
Land services based on sharing Twin / Double Rooms	\$ 1681	\$ 857	\$ 1117	\$ 1630	\$ 2271
Domestic airfare (Economy Class): subject to change when booking.	NA	NA	NA	\$ 350 Delhi - Cochin & Madurai - Delhi	\$ 630 Delhi – Paro - Delhi
TOTAL COSTS based on sharing Twin / Double Rooms	\$ 1681	\$ 857	\$ 1117	\$ 1980	\$ 2901
SUPPLEMENT for Single Rooms	\$ 464	\$ 117	\$ 174	\$ 505	\$ 258

The above prices include the following services as per the enclosed itineraries:

- Domestic Airfare as mentioned in Extensions C and D.
- Train Fare as mentioned in Extension B.
- Meeting and assistance at all airports/railway stations in India / Bhutan.
- Local English-speaking guides at each city
- Airport transfers and all land transportation by private AC vehicles.
- All city tours and activities mentioned in the itinerary, including entrance fees to places of visit.
- Transportation and Portage of one suitcase per member up to 15 Kg each.
- Accommodation in base-category rooms at the hotels/camp indicated below or similar, including Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner.

Hotels Included in Main Trip- Dam Project (07 Nights)

City	Hotel Included (or similar)	Category	Nights
Delhi	The Royal Plaza/ Bloom	First Class	02
Project Site	Deluxe Camp (Project Site)	Tented Cottages	04
Delhi	The Royal Plaza / Bloom	First Class	01

Hotels Included in Pre-Trip A: The Taj Mahal & Jaipur (03 Nights)

City	Hotel Included (or similar)	Category	Nights
Agra	Grand Mercure	First Class	01
Jaipur	Royal Orchid Central	First Class	02

Hotels Included in Post Trip B: Adventure in the Himalayan Foothills (04 Nights)

City	Hotel Included (or similar)	Category	Nights
Shivpuri	Snow Leopard	Tented Cottages	02
Rishikesh	Dewa Retreat	First Class	01
Delhi	The Royal Plaza / Bloom	First Class	01

Hotels Included in Post Trip C: Kerala (07 Nights)

City	Hotel Included (or similar)	Hotel Category	Nights
Cochin	CGH Casino Hotel	First Class	02
Kumarakom	CGH Coconut- Lagoon	First Class, Heritage	02
Munnar	Tall Tree - Munnar	First Class	02
Madurai	GRT Regency - Madurai	First Class	01

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Hotels Included in Post Trip D: Bhutan (07 Nights)

City	Hotel Included (or similar)	Hotel Category	Nights
Thimphu	Hotel Pedling / Hotel Gakyil / Peaceful Residency	Sup. Tourist class	02
Gangtey	Hotel Dewachen / Phuntsho Yangkhil Lodge/ Wangchuk Hotel	Sup. Tourist class	01
Punakha	Hotel Sonamgang / Damchen, YT/ River Valley	Sup. Tourist class	02
Paro	Hotel Eye of the Tiger/ Jagathang Village Inn / Hotel Olathang	Sup. Tourist class	02

The following services / expenses are not included in the trip costs specified above:

- International airfare.
 - Passport, Visa processing fee, fees for inoculations, and health certificates.
 - Any meals other than specified above.
 - Personal expenses such as drinks, room service items, laundry, telephone calls or tips.
 - Any additional expenses caused by, or liability for, disturbance in trip program due to circumstances beyond our control such as airline or railway delays, road block, vehicle malfunctions, weather Conditions, sickness, natural disasters, wars, riots, etc.
 - Liability for or insurance against injury, loss of life, accidents, damage to or loss of goods.
 - Camera fee or any item not specifically listed above.
-

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Trip Application Form: Section 1

Please complete Section 1 & 2 of this form and e-mail a scanned copy or a photo to

damteams@gmail.com

Last name as on your passport:	
First name as on your passport:	
Middle names as on your passport:	
Rotary Club and District (if applicable)	
Position in Rotary Club and/ or District. (If applicable)	
Address: House / Apartment Number, Street, City, State, ZIP / PIN, Country	
Date of Birth: Month / Date / Year	
Passport Number	
Passport Issued at (place of issue)	
Passport Issue ON (date of issue)	
Passport valid till (date)	
Telephone No. (Country Code - Area Code – Phone Number)	
Mobile Telephone number	
WhatsApp's Number (Optional):	
E-Mail Address:	
Details of person to be contacted in case of emergency:	
Name:	
Relationship	
Address: House / Apartment Number, Street, City, State, ZIP / PIN, Country	
Telephone No. (Country Code - Area Code - Phone Number)	
Mobile Telephone number (Country Code - Phone Number)	
Fax Number (Optional): (Country Code - Area Code - Phone Number)	
E-Mail Address:	

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Trip Application Form Section 2

Would you like to join one of the Extension Trips? Which Extension Trip would you like to join: Please circle your answer and delete the other options	Yes / No
Extension A: Pre-Project (Taj Mahal & Jaipur)	Extension A
Extension B: Post-Project – Himalayan Foot Hill	Extension B
Extension C: Post-Project – Kerala Backwater	Extension C
Extension D: Post-Project – Bhutan	Extension D
Both Extensions	Extension A and Extension B
Both Extensions	Extension A and Extension C
Both Extensions	Extension A and Extension D
Do you require a single room? Please circle your answer and delete the other option	Yes / No
If you do not require a single room, is there anyone traveling with you who will share your room? Please circle your answer and delete the other option	Yes / No If Yes: Name of the person who will share my room:
Or, will you accept to share a room with any other participant? (same sex) Please circle your answer and delete the other	Yes / No
Please indicate the city name and the International airport code in your home country from where you will travel to India.	Name of your home city _____ Country _____ International airport Code _____
Will you book your own International flights? Or would you prefer High Points to provide this service at the applicable airfare? Please circle your answer and delete the other option.	A. I will book my international air travel B. I prefer High Points to book this for me.
Please indicate your shirt size (for the Team T-shirts) S, M, L, X, XX, or XXX	

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Destination Highlights

Delhi: Delhi is one of the world's oldest cities and has been continuously inhabited since the 6th century BCE. No fewer than eight cities have been built side by side on this site over the centuries. The city as it stands today has been created by Hindu, Muslim and British builders. In a few minutes, you can be transported from the neo-Classical architecture of the elegant garden city of New Delhi to the narrow, twisting lanes that surround Chandni-Chowk in the old town.



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Extension A: Pre-Project (Taj Mahal & Jaipur)

At **Agra**, the Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan presented the world its most magnificent monument to conjugal Love. A colossal, perfectly proportioned mass of marble, the **Taj Mahal** is literally a jewel. It was fashioned over 17 years by 20,000 craftsmen & laborers. From a distance, it seems to float, like a fantastic mirage, upon the banks of the River Yamuna.



Jaipur: The fortifications surrounding **Jaipur** give it a medieval atmosphere. The delicate honeycomb design of the Palace of Winds' glows in the light of the setting sun. Quaint bazaars thrive around this edifice. High above the city, the towers and domes of the Amber Palace are reminiscent of scenes from a fairy tale.

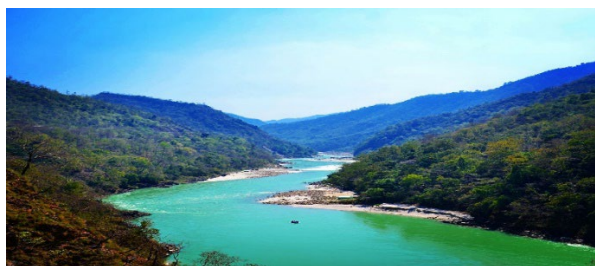


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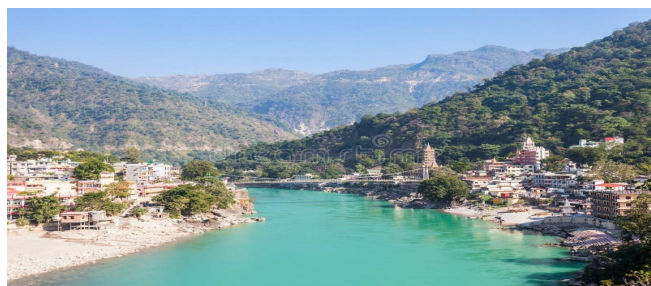
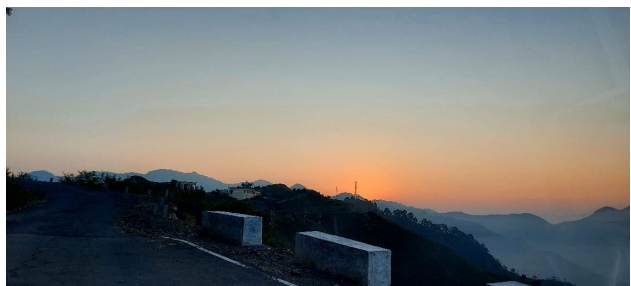
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Extension B: Post-Trip: Adventure in the Himalayan Foothills

Uttarakhand, also known as Dev Bhoomi or Land of the Gods for its temples and spiritual connections, lies in the Himalayas. With over 50 per cent of its area covered in forests, this North Indian state is celebrated for its natural and cultural heritage. The holy River Ganges and River Yamuna originate in this region. The state has gained a reputation of being the adventure hub of India with trekking, river rafting, kayaking, cycling, mountain biking and other exciting activities becoming very popular. Mountains, rivers, jungles, temples, ashrams and myriad adventure opportunities available make this state an exciting place to visit.



Shivpuri is a small village 16 Km from Rishikesh and a famous river rafting spot. This small but beautiful village has shot to fame for its adventure tourism, the scenic background of lofty mountains, river rafting in the holy river Ganga and some great campsites. The major attraction of this village is the Ganga River, and water adventure sports like rafting & kayaking.



Rishikesh is a quiet and peaceful town that attracts pilgrims from all over India and the world. Time stands still here, as the eternal waters of the river emerge from the foothills of the mighty Himalayas. The river passes ancient hermitages where Hindu sages and their disciples live a life devoid of luxuries and rich in meditation and introspection, then past temples and ghats where

strange rituals are performed, finally entering the plains to begin its long journey across the North-Indian plateau towards the Bay of Bengal. Rishikesh is also the "Yoga Capital of the World", a good place to study Hindu philosophy and religion in all its aspects. In the evening we will walk along the true left bank, after crossing a bridge. Along the river are some turreted architectural oddities including the 13 story Kailashanand Ashram. There is a pleasant 2 KM walk from the Laxman Jhula to the Shivanand Jhula.

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Evening Arti on the Ganges. It is believed that when the Goddess Ganga descended to Earth, she turned into a River to wash out the sins of predecessors of King Bhagirath. Notably, people perform the Ganga Aarti every day to thank the Goddess and therefore, perform the rituals by chanting shlokas and bhajans

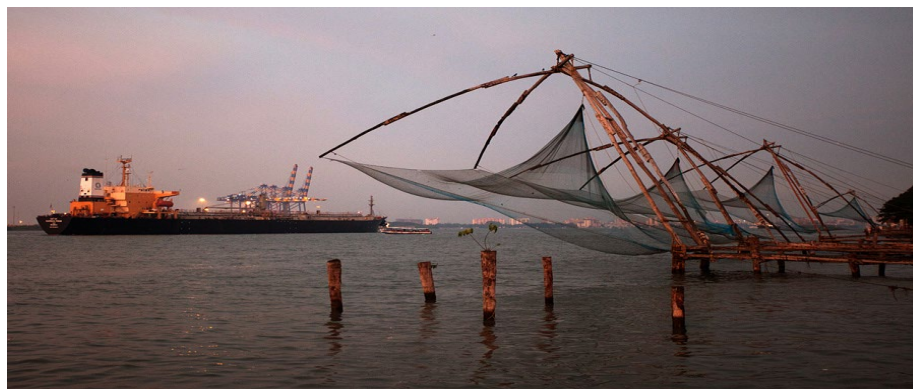


Haridwar. It is said that when the Gods left their footprints on the land of Haridwar, metaphorically they also left an indelible mark on the spiritual ethos of every Hindu - more so, the devout, who would later follow their holy paths all across this blessed land. Haridwar stands as the gateway to the four pilgrimages of Uttrakhand. Of such significance is Haridwar in the thought of India's traditional Hindus that it has earned the sobriquet 'Gateway to the Gods'. Legend

has it that the holy Ganga, the holiest of all rivers, which flows through this sacred city has been sanctified by the powerful Trinity of Hindu mythology and the centre of the pantheon - Lords Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.

Down the ages, this special importance of Haridwar as the ever-refreshing mystic venue for the purification of body, mind and soul gained more impetus... Yet, beyond the mystic aura and mythology, Haridwar casts another magic spell on the visitor. Being one of the oldest living cities, Haridwar finds its mention in the ancient Hindu scriptures as it weaves through the life and time stretching from the period of Buddha to the more recent British advent. Haridwar has not only remained the abode of the weary in body, mind and spirit but also served as a centre of attraction for many, for learning the arts, science and culture. Haridwar's longstanding position as a great source for Ayurvedic medicines and herbal remedies as well as its unique Gurukul school of traditional education, the scenic beauty and lush greenery... all give the city a unique flavour and charm. In the evenings the ghats look breathtakingly beautiful, as thousands of diyas and marigold flowers float and illuminate the Holy waters.

Extension Trip C: Kerala



Cochin: Set on a cluster of islands and narrow peninsulas, the port city of Cochin (Kochi) reflects the eclecticism of Kerala perfectly. With a rich past and a bustling present, it has always been the business hub of the region from its early days. Cochin is a living

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blend of Peoples and Cultures. We shall find Jewish synagogues, Dutch architecture, Hindu temples and Chinese fishing nets. The air is heavy with the smell of exotic spices, and the shouts of Dhoti clad men pushing overloaded carts around the harbor.



Kumarakom is an unbelievably beautiful paradise of mangrove forests, emerald green paddy fields and coconut groves interspersed with enchanting waterways and canals adorned with white lilies. In this small water world we will come across plenty of traditional country boats. We will also enjoy an day cruise on the unique Houseboats of Kerala.



The Coconut Lagoon recaptures the essence of Kerala in a unique setting. Nothing has been added that does not already belong. And if the comforts of life enter (as they must), they do so in a way that leaves the harmony around them undisturbed. This is the perhaps the reason why Condé Nast Traveler rated *Coconut Lagoon* among the 25 best getaways in the world. Lie in a hammock on the lakeshore, and allow your senses to possess you.



Munnar is a gracious hill-town at about 5000 to 8000 ft, set amidst a picturesque section of Western Ghats. It offers a breath-taking expanse of tea plantations falling away to the horizon in precise green steps. Slender blue and red gum trees shoot up into the sky, and the heady fragrance of fresh tea wafts into the winding lanes of Munnar town from the surrounding tea- processing plants.



Madurai is one of the oldest cities of South India. It is situated on the banks of the river Vaigai, and is famous for its mighty Meenakshi Temple, the subject of an extraordinary number of myths. This city of festivals has one almost every day of the year. Trumpets and drums and religious chanting constantly fill the air. The bazaars bustle from dawn to dusk with pilgrims from all over the sub-continent. The object of their pilgrimage is the magnificent Meenakshi Temple, said to have been founded by the god Indra himself. It's towering, lavishly sculpted "gopurams" were raised in the 16th century. Its Hall of a Thousand Pillars is a great feat of structural engineering as well as art. The pillars are literally a great picture-book in stone, featuring the entire gamut of human expression, from stateliness and grace to lusty humor.

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Extension D: Bhutan

The Kingdom of **Bhutan**, a Buddhist kingdom on the eastern edge of the Himalayas, is known for its monasteries, fortresses, and dramatic landscapes, which range from subtropical plains to steep mountains and valleys. In the High Himalayas, peaks such as 7,326m Jomolhari are popular trekking destinations. Paro Taktsang monastery (Tiger's Nest) clings to cliffs above the forested Paro Valley.



Thimphu, perhaps the most unusual capital city in the world, is the seat of government. This bustling town is home to Bhutan's royal family, the civil service, and foreign missions with representation in Bhutan. It is also the headquarters for several internationally funded development projects. **Trashicho Dzong, Thimphu**, houses the throne room of the King and various government offices.



Buddha Dordenma Thimphu, statue sitting on top of a hill overlooking Thimphu. The Statue of Sakyamuni Buddha is one of the tallest in Asia (51.5 m). The site of Buddha Dordenma offers unobstructed views over the capital town.



Memorial Chorten, Thimphu:

Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it is a memorial to the late King ("the father of modern Bhutan"), and a monument dedicated to peace. During the mornings and evenings, it is a bustling place where people of all ages circumambulate the chorten/stupa, pray and prostrate

at the shrine, turn the big prayer wheels, offer butter lamps, and bask in the sun as they socialize and mingle.

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National Library: The National Library was established in the late 1960s primarily to conserve the literary treasures which form a significant part of Bhutan's cultural heritage. It now houses an extensive collection of Buddhist literature mostly in block-printed format, with some works several hundred years old. This collection, known as the Choekey Collection, mainly comprises Buddhist literature written in Choekey, the religious script of Northern

Buddhism, but also includes works written in Tibetan and in Dzongkha, Bhutan's national language. The library also displays the one of the biggest books in the world – "Bhutan" (a former Guinness Book of World's Record holder). Besides its sheer size and weight, the continuously printed images (printed on a roll of paper longer than a football field and with a gallon of ink) are spectacular – vivid colors and human size portraits.



Gangtey:

The 16th century **Gangtey Goempa (Monastery)** is perched on a hill that rises above the valley floor, making it a landmark for the valley. It is the central seat of the Pedling tradition of Buddhism in Western Bhutan, and was built as a centre of spiritual teaching.

Punakha is located in a sub-tropical valley with warm summers and pleasant winters. Punakha served as the capital of Bhutan until 1955, when the seat of government moved to Thimphu.



Chimi Lhakhang a temple dedicated to the "Divine Madman", an eccentric monk from the 16th century famous for many amusing, Rabelaisian folklore stories.



Punakha Dzong is placed strategically at the junction of the Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers. This ancient fortress is the winter residence of the monastic order's head and still serves as the administrative headquarters for the Punakha regio. It was built in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to serve as the religious and administrative center of the region. Damaged over the centuries by four catastrophic fires and an earthquake, the Dzong has been fully restored in recent years by the present monarch. It is open for visitors during the Punakha festival (early spring) and in the summer months.

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Sangchen Dorji Lhendrup Nunnery is perched on a ridge with spectacular views of **the Punakha** and Wangdue valleys. The temple houses a 14foot bronze statue of Avalokiteshvara, and a complex for higher studies and meditation. Apart from religious training, the nuns learn skills such as embroidery, tailoring and statue making.



The village of Talo or Nobgang is the ancestral home of the Queen Mothers of Bhutan. The villages are scattered along a ridge above the Punakha valley at an altitude of around 2,800m and is known amongst Punakha villages for its neat and clean appearance.



Nalanda Monastery houses the monks who are pursuing higher Buddhist studies and learning English as well. You may interact with the monks and chat with them. They will be more than happy to practice their English language skills with you.



Paro. This beautiful valley encapsulates a rich culture, scenic beauty, and hundreds of myths and legends. It is home to many of Bhutan's oldest temples and monasteries and the country's only airport. Mt. Jhomolhari (7,300m) reigns in white glory at the northern end of the valley, its glacial waters plunging through deep gorges to form the Pa Chu (Paro River)



Kichu Lhakhang is one of the oldest temples in the country. It is one of the 108 temples built in the Himalayas by the Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo to subdue a demoness in the 7th century. The building of this temple marks the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan.



The **National Museum** includes ancient Bhutanese art and artifacts, weapons, coins, stamps, and a small natural history collection.

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Tiger's Nest Hike (Total hike time 4-5 hrs.) The Tiger's Nest" monastery, the most famous of Bhutan's monasteries, is spectacularly located on

the side of a cliff 900m above the valley floor. It is said that in the 8th century, Guru Rinpoche flew on the back of a tigress from eastern Bhutan to this place and meditated in a cave there for three months, hence its name, "Tiger's Nest." The principal temple of the present monastic complex dates from 1692. The main structure was severely damaged by fire in 1998, but after many years of restoration, the complex has been fully restored to its former glory. A pilgrimage to Taktsang is the dream of a lifetime for the devout.
