

WALKING IN THE GURU'S FOOTSTEPS
– An Indian Pilgrimage Tour for SRF Members & Friends –
(Tour arranged by Network Tours, Ltd. Of New Delhi, India)

When

Our pilgrimage starts in New Delhi on Saturday, January 30, 2016. Note that this requires a USA departure no later than January 28. Pilgrims on the main portion of the tour will finish the trip in New Delhi on Wednesday, February 17. The optional “Himalayan Hills” extension concludes on Monday, February 22, also in New Delhi. It takes a minimum of one day to return to the USA. We settled on these dates for the tour because February weather in Northern India is generally very comfortable and favorable for travel.

Tour Operator

I am thrilled to be making this Indian pilgrimage with Delhi-based tour operator, **Network Tours** (www.nettoursindia.net). Network was responsible for all the arrangements on my previous trip to India in 2013. I cannot recommend Network highly enough. The employees at Network did a superb job organizing and presenting our pilgrimage for a very reasonable price. Our 19-member group was escorted by a Network representative throughout our 5,000+ km route. Professional, English-speaking, and very engaging guides were provided at each of Master’s special locations and at every major historical and cultural attraction. Accommodations were in YSS ashrams or very clean, comfortable hotels. All intra-India travel (by air, train, private A/C coach, van, and even rickshaw) was enjoyable and went according to plan with only minor deviations. I always found the Network staff exceptionally helpful and pleasant to deal with. They took care of every detail, ensuring the pilgrimage was both pleasurable and deeply meaningful for our band of travelers. I have every reason to believe Network will provide the same exemplary level of service again.

Description of 1st Segment

The trip in 2016 consists of two parts. The first part is a “Northern Indian Spiritual Pilgrimage” specifically customized for SRF members and friends. This 22-day portion of the trip (including travel days to and from India) focuses on many sacred sites and places of particular importance to SRF devotees. It also includes visits to a number of World Heritage Sites and observance of several significant spiritual and cultural events of interest to both Hindus and SRFers. Lodging is in YSS ashrams—where we may participate in all ashram meditations and activities—and in economical, comfortable hotels and guest houses.

Description of 2nd Segment (optional)

The second portion of the tour is an optional six day, five night “Himalayan Hills” extension that includes the holy cities of Rudraprayag, Rishikesh, and Haridwar. This part of the tour provides time to meditate at the sacred Vashistha Cave and to visit several ashrams (including Ananda Moy Ma’s, Keshavananda’s, and The Divine Light Society’s Sivananda ashrams), temples, and holy shrines. An optional half-day river rafting trip on the upper Ganges is also available.

Costs

The cost for the SRF pilgrimage (1st part of the journey) is \$1,990 USD, including all meals and lodging; inter-India air, rail, and private coach travel; and admittance to attractions. Tips and any extra donations to YSS ashrams are extra.

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The optional Himalayan Hills segment of the tour costs \$445 USD, with the same provisions as during the basic tour.

Pilgrims should allow approximately \$3-\$4 a day for tips. Personal donations to YSS of \$10-\$30 per ashram stay (allow less than \$100 total) are greatly appreciated but remain at each pilgrim's discretion.

Rooms are shared, and the ashrams generally segregate men and women. Single room occupancy at hotels can be arranged for \$345 USD additional. Ashram accommodations are comfortable, but basic, and may be considered austere by some. In lieu of staying in ashrams, twin lodging in nearby budget hotels can be arranged for an additional \$300 USD, but I strongly recommend staying in and fully enjoying the uplifting atmosphere of the ashrams.

The cost of the tour includes three meals and two bottles of drinking water per day.

Tour costs **do not** include air fares to/from India. Network will arrange roundtrip reduced-fare group-rate transportation from NY and/or LA, however, if enough tour participants are interested. Otherwise, one should count on paying at least \$1600-\$2000 for roundtrip tourist-class flights to New Delhi from America.

A deposit of \$500 USD is required to register and make a booking for the basic tour, \$600 USD for the basic tour plus the Himalayan Hills extension. A second deposit of \$1,000 is due November 1, 2015. Everyone's final balance is due in USD upon arrival in New Delhi.

An additional charge of \$200 USD is required for bookings after September 15, 2015.

Cancellation policies require graduated forfeitures if withdrawal from the tour occurs subsequent to the initial deposit. Network Tours' full cancellation policy and fees is available upon request

Some Highlights of the Trip

- **Delhi:** Stay at and participate in the spiritual activities of the large YSS Ashram in Noida. Visit important sites in India's capital city, including Mahatma Gandhi's memorial and the magnificent Akshardham Temple.
- **Brindavan:** Visit Lord Krishna's boyhood home, Keshavananda Ashram, and Goddess Temple.
- **Matura:** Visit Lord Krishna's then prison birthplace.
- **Agra:** Visit the incomparable Taj Mahal (World Heritage Site and one of the Seven Wonders of the World).
- **Puri:** Walk on the beach and visit Sri Yuktेशwar's Karar Ashram, Lord Jagannath Temple museum (Daya Ma was the first Westerner ever admitted to the temple), Konark Sun Temple (World Heritage Site).
- **Dakshineswar/Kolkata/Serampore:** Stay at YSS ashram and visit Parmahansa Yogananda's family homes in Kolkata; Tulsi Bose's home (Master's boyhood friend and disciple, and host upon Master's return to India in 1935-36), Vishnu Ghosh's home and yoga college; Mother Teresa's stirring home, convent, and crypt; a spectacularly beautiful Jain temple; Kali

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Temple (where Sri Ramakrishna lived and worshipped); Swami Viveikananda's Vedanta Society headquarters; site of Sri Yukteswarji's Serampore ashram site; Serampore College from which Master graduated; the Banyan tree at Roy Ghat where Babaji bestowed darshan on Sri Yukteswar, and much more.

- **Varanasi:** Take two boat rides on the Mother Ganga, stroll to Lahiri Mahasaya's home, and visit Ananda Moy Ma's Banaras home and ashram in India's holiest of cities. Experience the world-famous Ganga Arti at night. Visit the ancient Sarnath shrine outside Varanasi where Lord Buddha preached his first sermon (now a Buddhist pilgrimage site, awaiting World Heritage status).
- **Bodhgaya:** Visit the site where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.
- **Ranchi:** Stay at the YSS headquarters and retreat, relax and enjoy the beautiful grounds, and participate in daily meditations and satsangs.
- **Dwarahat:** Stay at the YSS Ashram, hike to Babaji's Cave, and enjoy the breathtaking view of the high Himalayas at sunset while participating in all ashram activities.
- **Rudraprayag:** En-route to Rishikesh, view the confluence of the two holy rivers, Mandakini and Alaknanda site of devastating floods in June 2013 and where Narada Muni worshipped Lord Shiva to learn music from him.
- **Rishikesh:** Meditate in the sacred Vashishta Cave where many saints have lived. Christ is believed to have stayed in another cave just a five minute walk away. Stroll to the ashrams, including the Divine Life Society's Sivananda Ashram, and local temples, shop for spiritual items in the bazaar, and participate in the Ganges Arti. Optional half-day river rafting trip on the Ganges.
- **Haridwar:** Visit Ananda Moy Ma's and Keshvananda's ashrams and various temples.

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