

# 21 Day Grand India Odyssey

USA –Delhi – Jaipur –Ranthambore Tiger Reserve – Agra (Taj Mahal)– Khajuraho – Sarnath – Varanasi (Ganges River) – Kathmandu – Bhaktapur – Patan – USA

**\*\*\*Guaranteed departures with SMALL group of no more than 18 passengers\*\*\*  
**Premium service with professional guides, deluxe hotels and sumptuous meals****

**The most comprehensive itinerary on India, exploring both the majestic monuments of the North, and the serene backwaters in the South**

*Take in India’s most compelling sights, and game viewing at Tiger Reserve  
 A boat ride on the Ganges, a visit of the Tea Plantation, a journey in the houseboat,  
 Then there is the inexpressible Taj Mahal –“ the gem of man’s handiwork” Lord Curzon called it,  
 “Without flaw or blemish, impossible to criticize, in capable of improvement,  
 the most perfect structure in the world”*

<p><b>Guaranteed Departures</b></p> <p><b>2010</b></p> <p>Jan 11, Apr 5, Feb 8, Oct 18, Mar 8, Nov 1,</p> <p><b>2011</b></p> <p>Jan 10, Mar 7, Feb 14, Apr 4,</p>	<b>FULL PACKAGE</b>		<b>LAND ONLY</b>	<b>Single Supplement</b>
	<p><b>Includes int’l airfare from USA</b>                  Please inquire for special rates for departures from other US cities</p>			
	<b>Los Angeles</b>	<b>New York</b>	<b>5880</b>	<b>4880</b>

**\*Choose your own departure date .....and enjoy *VIP Private Journey* – accompanied by a private English speaking guide, a chauffeur and an air conditioned car exclusively (based on min. of 2 passengers)! Simply add \$190 per person on our LANDONLY cost and enjoy premium service with maximum flexibility and personal attentions!**

For full package with int’l airfare, US tax and fuel surcharge of \$198, India and Nepal domestic flight tax of \$ 162 per person is extra  
 LAND ONLY packages is not subject to US tax / fees. Only the India and Nepal domestic air tax of \$ 162 per person will apply.  
 Rates for departures from other major US gateway cities are available upon request.

Operated by *Orient Odyssey*



*B-Breakfast, L-Lunch, D-Dinner, F-In flight meals, SL / SD-Special local flavor meal or banquet*

**Day01 USA - Delhi**

Depart from Los Angeles, or New York. Enjoy award winning in-flight meals and services.

Move your watch one day ahead as you cross the international dateline. \*Prices for departing from other major gateway cities are available upon request. F

**Day02 Arrive in Delhi**

After immigration and customs, a local representative will greet and accompany you to the boutique 5 star, deluxe, *Svelte Hotel and Personal Suites*. Enjoy a restful night to recover from jetlag. F

**Day03 Delhi**

Welcome to the pulsating capital of India, where no less than eight empires rose and fell over the span of five thousand years. Synonymous with power and imperial sovereignty, Delhi intoxicated Hindu kings, Mughal emperors and the British Raj, all of whom established their empires here, despite warning that whoever

finds a new city at Delhi will lose it. And indeed they did. But not before leaving their distinct legacies throughout the city. Remnants of Delhi's glorious past and its valiant struggle for independence and freedom are manifest in all we see. Our adventure begins in [Old Delhi](#), the Mughal capital established by Shah Jahan in 1638. We drive by the magnificent [Red Fort](#). Within its walls are marble palaces and a grand audience chamber, the Diwan-i-Khas, where the Peacock Throne once stood. We visit the white onion dome and minarets of [Jama Masjid](#), the largest mosque in India. We tour at [Qutab Minar](#), a stunning 240 feet brick minaret – the tallest in the world – surrounded by an elaborate complex built in the Indo-Islamic architectural tradition. Not to miss is the unique [Iron Pillar](#), never rusted since erected 700 years ago. We also visit [Raj Ghat](#), Mahatma Gandhi's serene and evocative cremation site. This afternoon we explore [New](#)



[Delhi](#), added by the British to the old capital as the dream of Edwin Lutyen. This Indo-Saracenic city was a perfect blend of eastern extravagance and western constraint. Enjoy a drive on the impressive [Rajpath](#), we stop at the [India Gate](#). See the [Presidential Palace](#), the [Rashtrapati Bhavan](#), the [parliament](#), and the [secretariat buildings](#). We also drive pass the [Embassy district](#) and the [Connaught Place](#), the main shopping district of the capital. B/D

#### Day04 Delhi - Jaipur

We depart Delhi in the morning and drive to Jaipur (about six hours) on the busy national highway, passing villages, towns and markets. *Orient Odyssey's* "[People to People Contact](#)" program calls for a [random stop](#) on route at a [village or market](#), where we can observe and interact with locals to gain insight into true rural Indian life. In time for dinner we reach Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan and home of the Rajputs, a group of warrior clans who ruled this part of India for a thousand years. Built in 1727 by the warrior-astronomer Maharaja Jai Singh II, Jaipur is laid out as described in the ancient Hindu treatise on architecture "Shilpa-Shastra". Battlement walls with seven gates encircled the old city; broad avenues divide it into neat rectangles. We check-in at the 4.5 star, deluxe, [Four Point by Sheraton, Jaipur](#). B/D

#### Day05 Jaipur

With "*the tone of the autumn sunset*", almost the entire city of Jaipur was built by pink sandstone. We first look at the grand [Hawa Mahal \(Palace of Winds\)](#). This magnificent structure was built to allow the royal ladies of the palace to discretely watch the grand processions along the main street. We then enjoy an excursion to the [Amber Fort and Palace](#), a beautiful and very well preserved 16<sup>th</sup> century structure, built on four levels and surrounded by ruins. The fort and palace was the backdrop for the [Mira Nair](#) movie "*Kama Sutra – A Tale of Love*". Construction was begun in 1592 by



Maharaja Man Singh, the commander of Akbar's army, and was largely motivated by the highly defensible valley location. We will [ride on a colorful ceremonial elephant](#) to enter the main gate. Visit the [Temple of Kali](#), the [Hall of Victory](#), and the [Hall of Pleasure](#), among other interesting nooks and crannies. Enjoy a thrilling [downhill jeep ride](#) after the visit. In the afternoon we return to the city for a look at the majestic courtyards, pavilions, and gardens of the [City Palace](#), now housing fine Rajput and Moghul paintings, rare manuscripts and an impressive display of royal armory. Part of the compound is still occupied by the royal residences and is off limit to visitors. We also tour the impressive [Jantar Mantar](#), an astronomical observatory built in the early 1700s by Maharaja Jai Singh II, the great warrior-astronomer to which this city owes its name. If time permits, we can also enjoy the unparalleled shopping in one of Jaipur's many [bazaars](#). B/D



#### Day06 Jaipur – Ranthambore Tiger Reserve

After breakfast we drive to [Ranthambore Tiger Reserve and National Park](#). (about five hours). The reserve's romantic setting, with a 1,000 year old abandoned fortress, turquoise lakes and especially its "friendly" tigers have made Ranthambore a popular destination for wildlife film makers. Tigers are readily observed during



daylight, hunting or lazing about, oblivious of explorers and their cameras. Ranthambore was once the private hunting grounds of the Maharaja of Jaipur and its royal heritage manifests itself in the picturesque hunting lodges, chhatris and old fortifications that dot the

park. Check-in at the superior, **Ranthambhore Regency** and get ready for tomorrow's adventure! **B/L/D**

### Day07 Ranthambore Tiger Reserve

Today we explore this wonderful park, combining wildlife viewing with a look at the area's rich history. Two **game drives** are planned and you will enjoy early morning and

evening **jungle safaris** in shared **open air canter** (open sided mini trucks). Each safari is for a duration of 3 hours. The park provides an opportunity to view many of India's diverse and endangered animals, including the peacocks, langurs, wild boars, spotted deer, sambar, nilgai, Indian gazelle (chinkara), blackbuck, crocodile, and – of course – the Bengal tiger. **B/L/D**

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### Day08 Ranthambore – Bharatpur – Agra (Fathpur Sikri)

In the morning we board the train **Jan Shatabadi Express** for a smooth ride across the vast plains of Rajasthan. Reaching Bharatpur in the afternoon, we head to **Fatehpur Sikri**. Serving as the capital of the Mughal Empire between 1570 and 1586, Akbar built the city to celebrate the birth of an heir, the future Emperor Jehangir. After 14 years, there was not enough water to support the population, so the capital was moved back to Agra. The dryness that plagued Akbar and forced him to abandon his dream city is what has perfectly preserved this treasure of elegant palace structure carved from red sandstone. We will stroll in the glorious courtyards and halls conjuring up dreams of the mysterious past. See **Buland Darwaza**, the victory gate looms 134 feet high. Inspect the imperial **Jami Masjid**, the

**Panch Mahal** and the **Hall of Public Audience**.

Not to miss is **Pachchisi**, paved with black and white marbles, where the Emperor played chess using live slave girls as figurines. In time for dinner we reach Agra and check-in at the 5 star, Luxurious, **Hotel Jaypee Palace Agra**. **B/D**



### Day09 Agra

Today we enjoy the highlight of our journey, a visit to **Taj Mahal**, the most famous Mughal monument. Constructed by Shah Jahan in



memory of his wife, it is the most extravagant monument ever built for love. It took seventeen years, 20,000 workers and a king's treasury to build this wonder. Made by white

semi translucent marble, the entire monument is inlaid with countless semi precious stones in beautiful patterns. The dom is surrounded by four identical facades in perfect symmetry. With our guide, we wander the **inner chambers** and the **marble paths**, as millions have done over the centuries, and marvel at the architectural brilliance and commitment that went into its construction. **Theo Cruz** once wrote about the Taj that, "*The only way I could escape the feeling of being in a dream was to close my eyes*".

In the afternoon we visit **Agra Fort**. Previous incarnations of the fort date back to the Rajputs, but the citadel that stands today was the work of Akbar the Great, who built it over the course of eight years (1565-1573). The fort, a testament to the military might and architectural genius of the Mughals, was successively occupied by emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Shah Jahan died here, imprisoned by his son, left to gaze at the Taj Mahal he had built. We will explore **Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque)**, **Jasmine Tower**, **Dewan-e-Amn** (Throne Hall for Public Audiences), and **Dewan-e-Khas** where foreign dignitaries are received.



Late afternoon we will drive over the [Yamuna River](#) to explore the forerunner of the Taj Mahal,



the elaborate [Itmad ud Daula](#). In memory of his father, this mausoleum was built by Queen Nur Jahan in 1622. It is a perfect representation of the fine inlaid stonework and translucent marble screens for which Agra is so famous, and many historians believe

that this monument was Shah Jahan's inspiration for building the Taj and is often described as the "petite Taj". Later we return to the hotel for dinner and an evening at leisure. **B/D**

#### **Day10 Agra – Jhansi –Khajuraho**

After breakfast, we board [Shitabdi Express](#) Train at 8:15 a.m.. Enjoy the smooth ride and passing views of villages, fields, bridges, and rivers, arriving in Jhansi at 10:30 a.m.. We then head for Khajuraho by coach (about four hours). In the afternoon we will arrive at the 4 star, deluxe, [Ramada Khajuraho](#). We trade our bus for [bicycle rickshaws](#), weaving through the bumpy country roads to nearby [villages](#). Through [Orient Odyssey's "People to People Contact"](#) program, we visit a farmer's home, interact with family members and children, gaining an interesting insight into rural life in India. **B/D**

#### **Day11 Khajuraho – Varanasi (Sarnath Excursion)**

Khajuraho is a quiet little town that was once the religious capital of the Chandela Kings. The Chandelas were devout tantric Hindus and prolific patrons of religious architecture. They built numerous, elaborate temples to serve as emblems of their piety and strength. The temples are well known for their lavish use of erotic carvings, or mithuna, which Victorian Britishers described as "a little warmer than necessary".



To the ancient devotee, they symbolized the joy of life and the joy of spiritual liberation through Tantric ritual. Today we visit and photograph the [intricately carved temples](#) for which Khajuraho is so well known. The temples are adorned with exquisitely sculptured figures, a galaxy of gods and goddesses, beasts and

serpents, and a multitude of erotic couples, all representing a paean to life, to love and to joy. And while it is noted for its erotic carvings, the architecture is much more than that, for it sums up all the trends of earlier North Indian temple forms. The most important temples are the [Kandariya Mahadev](#) (1025 A.D.), the [Vishvanath temple](#) (1002 A.D.) and the [Lakshmana temple](#) (930 A.D.). Around noon we head to the airport and check-in for [Jet Airway](#) flight 9W724, leaving at 1:25 p.m., arriving in Varanasi at 2:10 p.m.. Upon arrival, a short drive takes us to [Sarnath](#). It was here at the [Deer Park](#) that Sakyamuni Buddha, having achieved enlightenment at Bokh Gaya, delivered his first message of the middle path to final nirvana. Also of interest are excavated pillars from the time of the Mauryan Empire (321-184 B.C.), and stupas from as late as the 12 century. Tonight we check-in at the 5 star, luxurious, [Radisson Hotel Varanasi](#). The evening is free to relax. **B/D**

#### **Day12 Varanasi – Mumbai**

Welcome to Varanasi. Situated on the banks of the sacred Ganga River, Varanasi has been a center of learning and civilization for over 2,000 years. Also known as [Benares](#), it is a



holy city dedicated to Lord Shiva. Like Jerusalem, Rome, and Athens, Varanasi is one of the world's ancient living cities. A nineteenth century missionary, [M.A. Sherring](#), was overwhelmed by the antiquity of the city when he wrote: "Twenty-five centuries ago, at least, it was famous. When Babylon was struggling with Nineveh for supremacy, when Tyre was planting her colonies, when Athens was growing in strength, before Rome had become known or Greece had contended with Persia, or Cyrus had added luster to the Persian Monarchy, or Nebuchadnezzar had captured Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of Judea had been carried into captivity, she had already risen to greatness, if not to glory". For Hindus, to die in Kash (Varanasi) insures release, or moksa, from the endless karmic cycle of rebirth and suffering. It is India in microcosm, both the beautiful and the repellent. This morning we rise early and take a [boat-ride on the Ganga](#) to observe the [sunrise](#) and the famous ghats. Here, tens of thousands of pilgrims gather on the steps that lead down to the

river to bathe in the sacred water as the city begins to come alive in the magical misty light of dawn. For thousands of years, bathing ghats have cleansed themselves of their sins in the sacred River Ganges and sought release from the cycle of rebirth. The antiquity, like its spirituality, is shrouded in immortal time. We then walk through the warren of crooked, congested alleys of this city to observe the daily about. **Mark Twain** once joked: “*Benares is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together!*” After a short rest at our hotel, we drive through the campus of the famed



Hindu University, the greatest seat of oriental learning in the country. We will stop at Bharat Mata (the Mother of India) Temple,

and Durga (Goddess of Power) Temple, also popularly known as the Monkey Temple. The guide will accompany us to the airport and assist us for check-in for Air India flight IC195, leaving at 1:45 p.m., reaching Mumbai at 3:45 p.m.. Our representative will greet and accompany you to the 5 star, luxurious, Trident Nariman Point, Mumbai. Enjoy a restful night.  
F

### Day13 Mumbai (Elephanta Carvings)

Mumbai is India’s most dynamic metropolis. It is the country’s major industrial and financial center, and is also the main hub for the Indian film industry “Bollywood”. It is a melting pot for Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees and Sikhs. Centuries of association with the British has left its imprint on the city with numerous buildings in Indo-Saracenic architecture. We

first board a wooden ferry at Gateway of India.



The cruise takes us across the harbor to the famous Elephanta Island where we will explore the cave temples. Carved between 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., it is famous for the magnificently sculpted panels. Return to the city, we will drive by the High Court, the ornamental University Building, the 280 ft high Rajabhai Clock Tower, the ornate Victoria Terminus, the colorful Crawford Market, and the Flora Fountain. We will visit the Prince of Wales

Museum, home to a world class collection of China ware, miniature paintings and sculpture. Then we drive along the Marine Drive, once it was called “Queen’s Necklace”, to the Malabar Hill, passing Malaxmi Temple. We also tour the Jain Temple and stroll in the Hanging Gardens where we can enjoy the beautiful view of the city center and the bay. B/D

### Day14 Mumbai – Cochin (Kochi)

After breakfast, we check-in for Jet Airways’ flight 9W401 departing at 10:35 a.m., arriving in Cochin at 12:20 p.m.. Welcome to Kerala, known for its spices. Travelers from around the world journeyed here to trade from as early as 1000 B.C. After we check-in at the 5 star, luxurious, Hotel Dream Cochin, we set off to explore this fascinating city on the Malabar Coast. Overlooking the Arabian Sea, Fort Cochin is a reminder of a golden era in trade and culture. Medieval churches, magnificent ruins and Chinese fishing nets dot this ancient town. Shady lagoons, wooded islands and canals winding past houses built on stilts have given



Kochi a nickname amongst Indians as the “Venice of the East”. A legacy of the earliest traders from the court of

Kublai Khan, the Chinese fishing nets are unmistakable as one enters the harbor. Records reveal that they were initially constructed between 1350 and 1450 A.D.. Made of teak wood and bamboo poles, they work on the principle of balance. Fishermen walk along the main beams of the net, causing them to descend into the sea. The best vantage point to espy this ingenious and hypnotic means of catching fish is from Vasco da Gama



Square, a narrow promenade that parallels the beach with little stalls that serve fresh seafood and tender coconuts. **Vasco de Gama**, the great Portuguese explorer, was the first European to land on India’s coast in 1498. From here we head to Mattancheri Palace, originally built by the Portuguese, enhanced by the Dutch, and finally Indianised with some wonderful murals depicting scenes from the Ramayana. The black “marble” floor is in fact a mix of coconut shell,

charcoal, lime, plant juices and egg-white. We then tour the [Church of St. Francis](#). Constructed in old Spanish style, it was the first church built in India. **Vasco de Gama** was originally buried here in 1524, but his remains were eventually returned to Lisbon. Next we go to the [Pardesi Synagogue](#) in [Jew Town](#). Built in 1568, it is the oldest synagogue in the commonwealth. Before the mass immigration of the Jews to Israel in the early 1950s, they lived quite comfortably for well over 1,000 years in Kerala. In the 18th century the synagogue was extensively renovated with the addition of the clock tower and floor installation of hand-painted tiles imported from China. After dinner we will drive to the local [performing arts center](#) to witness the spectacular [Kathakali dance performance](#), the popular and sacred 400 year old dance drama of Kerala.

Classical Kathakali requires rigorous training to attain complete body control and sensitivity to emotion to render all nuances through expressions and gestures. It incorporates elements from local folk and martial arts as well. Characters with elaborate costumes and painted faces re-enact stories from the epic Mahabharata and Ramayana. **B/D**



#### **Day15 Cochin – Allepey - Houseboat**

This morning we drive to the village of [Allepey](#) (about three hours). On route, enjoy *Orient Odyssey's* "[People to People Contact](#)" program with a stop at village [coil making factory](#) and interact with locals. The [backwater](#) region of Kerala is an unbelievably beautiful paradise of mangrove forests, emerald green paddy fields and coconut groves, interspersed with a 900 kilometer network of meandering waterways.



Formed by 40 rivers that flow to the Arabian Sea from the Cardamom Hills, this network of canals, lakes and estuaries comprise one of India's most enchanting regions. We reach Allepey in time to board our [private houseboat](#). Traditionally called a [Kettuvallom](#), or [rice barge](#), the shallow and rounded hull of the boat is made without using a single nail. Each Anjali wood plank is joined to the next with strong coir rope and then coated

with black resin derived from boiled cashew kernels and fish oil. We will spend the rest of the day leisurely plying the canals and quietly immersing ourselves in life along the backwaters, witnessing the daily rituals of river life; women washing their laundry along the river banks, children splashing around in the placid warm water, water buffalos grazing lazily, and farmers tilling in the paddy fields. Not long ago, heavily-laden cargo wallams once plied the same waters, laboriously punted or tugged by sails. They shared their passage with fishing skiffs, chugging ferries and paddled dug-outs carrying goods to the market. We will see beaches with dense palm groves, and towering lighthouses at old trading ports. Each of our Kettuvallom has two or three air conditioned bedrooms with private bath. There is also a sitting area and a day bed in the front where one can lie down and enjoy the passing sceneries. The friendly crews will prepare delicious meals and snacks. The houseboat will dock at night. We will enjoy a drink under the stars and a good sleep. **B/D**



#### **Day16 Arriving in Kumarakom**

Wake up by the singing bird and the welcoming sunshine. Enjoy breakfast with a cup of Kerala tea. We continue sailing through the jade smooth waters, passing many villages, quacking squadrons of ducks and oared boats that carries cycles, bearded Syrian Christian priests, newsboys and fishwives with an aromatic basket. Around noon we enter the vast [Vembanad Lake](#).



In winter, Water fowls and cuckoos arrive here in abundance. We might even see large flocks of migratory wild ducks from Siberia coming in spectacular formation to roost. We arrive at our tranquil river resort at the 5 star, luxurious, [Zuri Kumarakom, Kerala Resort](#), situated right on the lake bank. A treasure trove for nature lovers, the Vembanad Lake lake is home to a wide variety of plant life, fish species and birds. The rest of the day is free. We can enjoy the spectacular sunset, book a spa or massage treatment, or unwind in the property's beautiful pool. Try the unique Ayurvedic Messages, in

which herbs and oils are used to rejuvenate body and skin. B/D

### Day17 Kumarakom – Periyar Wild Life Sanctuary

Today's highlight is a drive (about six hours) with spectacular sceneries. Our bus will climb several thousand feet into the high mountains. Enjoy *Orient Odyssey's* "People to People Contact" program, we make random stops at interesting villages and view points including a [rubber plantation](#). Late afternoon we reach our destination. Set high in the ranges of the Western Ghats is the [Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary](#). We check-in at the boutique, luxurious, 5 star,

[Elephant Court](#). The Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the best [tropical wildlife sanctuaries](#) in the world and is the repository of rare



endemic flora and fauna. It is home to elephants, tigers, leopards, bison, antelopes, wild boars and a wide variety of birds. The heart of the sanctuary is a reservoir formed in 1895. The lake meanders around the contours of the wooded hills, providing perennial source of water for the local wildlife. The best time to view wild life is at dawn or dusk, when most animals come out of the forest to the shore to drink water. We will take a [wild life viewing cruise](#) this evening, or early tomorrow morning. B/D

### Day18 Periyar – Madurai

This morning we tour a [spice farm](#). Through *Orient Odyssey's* "People to People Contact"



program, we [chat with farmers](#) and learn characters of many spice plants. Kerala has long been regarded as the spice capital of the world. Although pepper remains to be the king of Kerala's spices, the state also produces of Cardamom, Cinnamon, Nutmeg, Mace, Ginger and Turmeric; as well as a rich cultivation of cashew nuts. We then proceed for a drive to [Madurai](#) (about four hours), the "temple town of South India". On route we stop at a [Tea Farm](#) and / or a [Tea Factory](#). We arrive at the luxurious, boutique, [Heritance Madurai](#) in time for dinner. Madurai is one of South India's oldest cities. It was the seat of the Pandya

Empire between the 7th and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and briefly served as the capital for an Islamic sultanate in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1364, Madurai became a part of the Vijayanagara Empire and by the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the local Hindu governors, the Nayakas, proclaimed Madurai an independent kingdom until it passed into the hands of the British in 1840. Madurai was home to the first Sangam, the academy of Tamil poets and authors. Sangam literature represents the earliest writings in the Tamil language. Madurai is most famous for the awe-inspiring and riotously ornate [Meenakshi Temple](#), located in the heart of the old city. With the construction of this temple, Madurai began to thrive as a cultural epicenter and cherished pilgrimage for Tamils. The temple is dedicated to the consort of Lord Shiva. Its construction began under the patronage of the Nayaka ruler Tirumala (1623-60 A.D.). Tonight we will attend the mysterious

[evening prayer ceremony](#) of "Aarti" at the Meenakshi Temple, a short and interesting daily ritualistic procession



depicting Lord Shiva going to the bedroom to rest for the night. Since the exact time of "Aarti" is to be decided by the senior priests and might vary from day to day, we might have to wait for a long time in the dark temple grounds. B/D

### Day19 Madurai - Chennai (Madras) / Mahabalipuram

Today we will explore the magnificent [Meenakshi Temple](#) in detail. The compound boasts a total of nine gopurams (soaring pyramidal gateway towers of Dravidian temples), all of which are obsessively decorated with brightly colored sculpted figures of various deities, demons, guardians and animals. The gopurams have been redecorated and restored several times. Also within the temple complex is the



[Aayiram Kaal Mandapam](#) – [hall of a thousand pillars](#), with its fascinating study of human expression carved on each pillar, wall and ceiling. It contains many interesting artifacts, including a single light holder of 1,008 lamps which will be lit on festive occasions. Just outside we can see

the musical pillars, each emitting a different musical note when struck. We also explore the [Kambatti Mundapum](#), which contains pillars sculptured with various manifestations of Lord Shiva. Observe thousands of devotees come pay homage and play rituals. **Wilfred Blunt** once wrote about this temple “*made me at last feel as if I had seen a temple of Babylon in all its glory*”. Later we will tour [Thirumalai Nayaka Palace](#) and its massive [courtyard](#) and [grand hall](#). The next stop is the huge [temple tank](#) of [Mariamman Theppakulam](#), a spot rarely included in conventional tour programs. The tank is almost lake like, and is the largest one in the country. We will enjoy a leisurely stroll along the water front and observe busy local life.



Apparently it is also a favorite spot for locals to relax after work. After dinner, the guide will assist us to check-in for [Jet Airway](#)'s flight 9W3520, departing at 8:55 p.m., arriving in Chennai at 10:10 p.m.. We will check-in at the luxurious, 5 star, [Chariot Beach Resort](#) or [GRT Temple Bay](#). B/D

#### Day20 Excursion to the Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram

This morning we drive to [Mamallapuram](#), the “[City of the Seven Pagodas](#)”. Mamallapuram (also called [Mahabalipuram](#)) was the second capital and seaport of the Pallava Kings of Kanchipuram. We will explore this dynasty's rich history of art and architecture. A



wealthy maritime trade with Southeast Asia enabled the Pallava monarchs to construct a stunning collection of rock temples, shrines and sculptures, which garnered them both religious merit and promoted the political and social ideals of South Indian society. Their greatest architectural achievement was reached in the visual dramatization of Indian mythology on delicately sculptured temples. Life-size stone statues of an elephant, bull and a lion guard these amazing structures, which were designated a World Heritage site in 1984. One of the most striking works of art is “[Arjuna's Penance](#)”, also known as “[Descent of the Ganges](#)”, a bas-relief

depicting the epic tale from the Mahabharata of the hero Arjuna. Despite its mammoth proportions (27 meter long and 9 meter wide) it is carved with remarkably intricate detail. A number of stone cutters still work in Mammallapuram, producing traditional sculptures that are exported across the world. We will also visit the legendary [Shore Temple](#), stood by the sea for 12 centuries. This afternoon we enjoy the excursion to [Kanchipuram](#), one of the greatest temple complexes in the country. “[The Golden City of a Thousand Temples](#)”, Kanchipuram is one of the seven sacred cities of India (the second holiest after Varanasi) and the erstwhile capital of the Pallava Kings from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Pallava Dynasty controlled southeastern India from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.. Kanchipuram later became the bastion of the Chola and Vijayanagar Kings, the Muslims and the British. We will focus on the most significant and impressive temples, including [Kailasanatha](#), the oldest temple, dating back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and [Sri Ekambaranathar](#), the largest temple, covering over 12 hectares. B/D



#### Day21 Chennai (Madras)

This morning enjoy a scenic 1 hour drive to Chennai and check-in at the 4 star, deluxe, [The Pride](#). Today we explore the bustling capital city of Chennai, the fourth largest metropolitan city in India and the youngest. Formerly known as [Madras](#), the city remains steeped in rich tradition and civilization despite strong tides of modernization. The birth of the city is associated with the construction of [Fort St. George](#) by the



British East India Company in 1639. It was the first bastion of British power and the nucleus from which its vast empire grew. Within the fort is [St. Mary's Church](#), the oldest Anglican church in the country. Built in 1680, it was the site of Governor [Elinu Yale](#)'s wedding – the Governor of Chennai, who subsequently became the first benefactor and namesake of Yale University. We will also visit the [National Art Gallery](#) and

explore its [bronze collection](#). The most stunning sculpture is the Chola period [Nataraja](#), the God Shiva, in cosmic dance pose. Our bus will [drive along the marina](#), the elegant seaside promenade to the old Indian section of [Mylapore](#). Here we will see the [San Thome Basilica](#) – the culmination of the enduring legend of **Thomas Didymus**, the apostle who doubted and who is believed to have lived and preached on Mylapore’s shores. The tour ends at the [Mylapore Temple](#). We will enjoy a free evening to explore the city at our own pace. B/D

Fuel surcharges and taxes are subject to change. Updated and accurate amount will be advised before the ticketing deadline. Tour cost is quoted based on current foreign exchange rate as of November 1, 2009. Price is guaranteed once full payment is received.

*Kindly refer to General Terms & Conditions*

**Day22 Chennai – USA**

After breakfast, we savor our unforgettable **journey to the splendor South India**, and board our homebound flight, arriving in USA on the same day. B/F

**\*Optional Extension**

Our programs are flexible! You can extend your stay in Kathmandu, or go to South India to explore unspoiled backwater countries. You can also connect this package with an exploration of the majestic mountain kingdom of Bhutan.....Please contact us for more information.

**\*International Flights**

Orient Odyssey features *Continental Airlines, United Airlines, Air India, Etihad Airways, United Emirates Airlines, Qatar Airlines*, and / or *Northwest Airlines / Delta Airlines* as the international carrier for this package. Based on your departure cities and tour logistics, Orient Odyssey reserves the right to secure other major international carrier for your journey. Flight arrangements will be finalized at least 60 days before departure.

Sample international flight schedules are as follows. Schedules are subject to change.

From Los Angeles (LAX):

CO16	Los Angeles – Newark	1020 / 1840
CO82	Newark – New Delhi	2045 / 2120
IT233	Chennai – New Delhi	1655 / 1940
CO83	New Delhi – Newark	2235 / 0430
CO91	Newark – Los Angeles	0640 / 0950

From New York (JFK):

EY100	JFK – Abu Dhabi	2200 / 1950
EY219	Abu Dhabi - New Delhi	2205 / 0300
EY269	Chennai – Abu Dhabi	0500 / 0735
EY101	Abu Dhabi – JFK	1005 / 1630

**\*Note**

For inquiries, please feel free to call us at

**1-800-637-5778**

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