

ZEN ORIENTAL JOURNEYS

Asian Arts, Education, and Travel Consultancy

ABN 64 661 070 230 ATAS Member A10966

Phone 0401 123 347

Email lee.grafton@bigpond.com



<http://www.zenorientaljournays.com.au>



A Mindful Journey through the Heart

Study Tour: *A mindful journey through the heart*

Dates: 4th–13th January 2019

Location: Tamil Nadu, India

Tour guide: Jan Carey, Founder of *Help-A-School Foundation*,
and Executive Director/ Facilitator of *The Mindful Classroom*

Tour overview: A 10-day *mindful journey* in Tamil Nadu for teachers/ educators interesting in; building connections with teachers / classes in remote Indian village schools, and children at a Children's Home in Vellore, immersing into the spiritual heart of India, and participating in daily mindfulness practices facilitated by a trained instructor.

The **Help-A-School Foundation** was founded in 2014 by a South Australian school principal, **Jan Carey**, after an inspirational and heart-felt visit to Vellore in South India. Since then, Jan has visited the Tamil Nadu area seven times and made regular contact with 3 schools and an orphanage that her group of inspired colleagues & students support through the Help-A-School Foundation.

The aim of the Foundation is to support educational opportunities for children in rural and disadvantaged communities in Tamil Nadu, India. HASF is a registered Australian Charity. Feel free to check out their projects and activities www.helpaschoolfoundation.com

Jan's philosophy centres on thinking that we all can make a positive difference to the world in this lifetime, by connecting through our heart with the people & opportunities around us. Jan believes that if we all reached out to help one child, one family, one school, or one community become more joyous... it would make a global difference.

Jan has invited **Zen Oriental Journeys** to collaborate in designing and operating a tour to Tamil Nadu, to engage participants through their hearts with the local communities in which she works, as well as see some of the great sites of Indian culture and civilization.

"My desire for this study tour is to combine my passion in teaching mindfulness - with teachers - with India - with charity work and volunteering ... all combined with travel! My recipe for happiness!!! I am really passionate that teachers experience India through a lens of mindfulness, and connection with the spirit and heart of India and its people. The 'sightseeing' aspects are secondary to the heart-connection of people and culture, but primary to gaining an understanding and context for the life of the people. I want the pace of the tour to be gentle but deep through immersion and allow time for daily meditations and group sessions together".

Jan has contacts in India who have connected her with a district education superintendent in the region of Tamil Nadu near Pondicherry. He has allowed her and colleagues to visit schools there and donate resources, furniture, books and other essential items for the students. Participants will see first-hand what has already been done with fundraising money through the Help-A-School Foundation, and what else may be requested from the schools.

'This tour provides a unique opportunity for teachers to connect these experiences with their own classroom & students for real-life learning and involvement. Teachers may consider engaging their class with learning about Indian village areas, and raise funds (prior or after the tour) to support the schools' requests for resources or equipment. What a fantastic opportunity to engage SA students in taking action for global causes!'

Jan is a trained teacher with 30 years of experience. She has worked in primary and secondary schools, and has held various school leadership roles, including principal for the past 9 years. Jan's interest in mindful practices began 10 years ago and has evolved to include international training in mindfulness programs. She is Executive Director of *The Mindful Classroom*, and currently facilitates mindfulness courses for teachers, leaders & educators all over SA. Jan's vision is to help students and teachers become more empowered in their lives through learning and using mindfulness practices and tools. See more here: www.themindfulclassroom.com.au

Our mindful study tour will include: daily guided mindfulness meditation practices facilitated by Jan (which are suitable for beginners or practising meditators), group sessions for discussion time to debrief about the day and learn mindfulness techniques to bring into practice in our lives and work.



"I invite you to join me on this unique mindful journey through the heart" Jan Carey



Proposed Tour itinerary (Subject to change due to local conditions and opportunities)

Day 1 Fri 4th Jan 2019 Chennai

Fly from Australia to Chennai. You may select and book your own choice of airlines and flights, but we recommend Singapore Airlines flight from Adelaide to Singapore, then Singapore to Chennai. **Zen Oriental Journeys can assist you with all flight arrangements.**

Tonight after arrival, you will be transferred to the Trident Hotel by their courtesy cars.

Day 2 Sat 5th Jan Chennai, drive to Mahabalipuram

After breakfast, we will meet together for a welcome and introductory session before driving through Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu State in our air conditioned mini-bus down the coast to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Mahabalipuram.

Here we will explore the colourful street shops, the beautiful beach and the great Dravidian monolithic temples and carvings before transferring to our hotel. Group session to debrief and connect.

Tonight, enjoy a performance of *Bharata Natyam*, *Kathakali*, *Kathak* or other traditional Indian Dance and music. There is a wonderful a Dance Festival near the Shore Temple and 'Arjuna's Penance', Mahabalipuram, from 6.30 – 8.30PM.



Day 3 Sun 6th Jan Mahabalipuram drive to Pondicherry

Morning group session, then a drive to Pondicherry district - local exploration of this one-time French Colony, including the Ghandi memorial, the beautiful promenade along the beach-side, and the Sr Aurobindo Ashram. We will spend time sitting in meditation in the peaceful and tree-shaded courtyard where Sri Aurobindo and The Mother spent much of their time. After an evening stroll along the promenade, we will have a group session to debrief and connect.

Day 4 Mon 7th Jan Pondicherry; Village school visit

Today we will visit 2 village schools that Help-A-School Foundation (HASF) have begun supporting. Spend time in classrooms with the children and teachers, read stories or draw with them as we provide the classes with additional resources and reading materials requested. Meet with the education district superintendent of this district (lunch together at restaurant) and discuss any questions you may have about education in Tamil Nadu.



Day 5 Tues 8th Jan Pondicherry excursion to Auroville

A full day visit to Auroville, a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realize human unity.

Here we will walk the Path of Peace with its inspirational quotes, spend time under the majestic bayan tree, and meditate overlooking the Matrimidir, a huge golden sphere symbolising the birth of a new consciousness, at the centre of Auroville's peace garden.



Day 6 Wed 9th Jan Pondicherry, drive to Vellore



Today we travel to Peedam /Vellore district: Our group has the unique and heart-opening opportunity to spend time at Karunalaya Children's Home, where over 45 children are cared for.

Today we roll up our sleeves to help... this could be helping to weed, water or plant in the newly developing vegetable garden, painting, cleaning or helping with the care of the children in any way we can. Spending time playing, dancing and talking with the children is an absolute highlight of the tour.

Later in the evening, we travel to Peedam. We will be staying at Kamalinivas Ashram for the next 4 nights, to experience life in an ashram. (# More information below about what to expect in an ashram/ Narayani Peedam.)

Kamalinivas Ashram

Day 7 Thurs 10th Jan Peedam

Morning group session to orientate at the ashram and the nearby temples. We will visit the Sripuram Golden Temple to walk the star-shaped path to the majestic inner temple of Lakshmi (Hindu goddess of wealth & prosperity) Free time in the afternoon. # Optional puja with Sri Shakti Amma.

Kamalinivas Ashram

Day 8 Fri 11th Jan; Peedam

Day of service in Peedam (Indian ashram style): Attend an early morning puja ceremony, volunteer at Anna Dhanam (A food hall that provides free meals for an average of 10,000 people per day), or spend time at Sri Narayani Vidyalaya school - helping the children, reading, practicing English skills. An optional visit to the local dog shelter can also be arranged for those interested.

Please note:

In 2018, our study tour group was given special permission to visit the remote tribal villages in the mountains (about 3 hours from Peedam). This was a unique experience, where we were part of a program to provide blankets for these poor communities. We hope that we may be given another opportunity to visit this remote location next year.



The itinerary may alter if this occurs.

Kamalinivas Ashram

Day 9 Sat 12th Jan; Peedam

Today is Vishnu day. Watch a devotional washing ceremony performed on a 10-foot-tall statue of the God Vishnu. Priests pour milk, rose water, tumeric, fruit and even yoghurt of this deity. A spectacular event to see. # Optional puja with Sri Shakti Amma in afternoon/evening.

Kamalinivas Ashram

Day 10, Sunday 13th Jan

After breakfast, depending on flight times, spend free time at either the Sripuram Golden Temple, Peedam Temple or Sri Narayani Vidyalaya school (all with easy walking distance). Car transport to return to Chennai - flights home.

About Sri Narayani Peedam

Thirumalaikodi or Malaikodi is a small village outside Vellore in Tamil Nadu, South India. It is surrounded by mountains and lush, scenic beauty. In Thirumalaikodi, several centuries ago, the Saints and Sages performed intense penance for many years to the Universal Mother (The ParaSakthi)! They prayed for Amma to descend on the Earth to protect the entire creation from the afflictions of the Dark Age (Kaliyuga).

Who is Sri Shakti Amma?

Sri Narayani Amma was born on January 3rd, 1976. It became clear from birth that this baby was very special. Amma was born with a distinct mark of the "Namam"* (Divine Symbol), which was vividly visible to all. Knowing the meaning of the symbol, many recognized the child to be holy and very blessed, and from a very early age, Amma began showing a great interest in spiritual life. On the way to a temple one day, Amma was sitting in a bus by the window, gazing towards the sky. Suddenly a ray of energy traveled from Amma into the sky and took the form of Goddess Narayani.

On May 8th, 1992, Amma proclaimed to the village that Amma is Goddess Narayani who has descended on earth. Amma now performs daily pujas, service & discourses, which are all done to elevate people into the realms of spirituality. To raise humanity into Godliness is Amma's goal. Amma now travels to different parts of the world spreading Amma's message and guiding mankind on the spiritual path. Amma's miracles and prophecies continue to alleviate people's sufferings.



Please read more about Amma and Sri Narayani Peedam at <http://www.narayanipeedam.org/>



Room at Kamalinivas Ashram



Kamalinivas Ashram buildings



Sripuram Golden Temple



Donation of cow & calf ceremony



Blanket donations to village children



Pongal celebrations at the Vidyalaya school – sand picture

Indicative tour costs

Indicative Land Tour price	Per person twin share	\$1310.00
Mandatory donation of AUD 250 to the <i>Help-A -School Foundation projects</i>		\$ 250.00
Total		\$1560.00

(Single Supplement \$595)

Local Payments in Peedam

Kamalinivas Ashram \$20 donation per person per night (4 nights) (twin or triple share) Paid on departure. This includes accommodation and all meals (delicious vegetarian buffet style) **\$80.00**

Return transport to Chennai Airport (arranged for you by Jan). Approx per person **\$30.00**

Zen Oriental Journeys will publish a Pre-Departure Bulletin with information about obtaining the Indian visa, weather, medical and the like.

The above Land Tour cost includes:-

- 1 night's accommodation at Chennai
- 1 night's accommodation at Mahabalipuram
- 3 night's accommodation in Pondicherry.
- Breakfasts at the above-mentioned hotels
- Air-conditioned mini-coach to Chennai and Mahabalipuram
- Air-conditioned mini-coach until 9th January
- Water provided on the coach free of charge
- Entrance fees to the Mahabalipuram World Heritage precinct
- All meals, donations and activities at Kamalinivas Ashram will be covered by your local payment

The above cost excludes

- International airfare and taxes to/from India.
- Any expenses of a personal nature such as hard/soft drinks, laundry, phone/fax calls.
- All other meals until arrival at the Ashram on the 9th
- Entrance fees for any other site where required.
- Visa for India
- Tips
- Travel Insurance (compulsory and should be taken out after your flight payment).

Land payment due Friday, November 2nd, 2018

Prices may fluctuate due to changes in charges, taxes and currency. Prices and flights are correct at time of preparing this program and are subject to availability at time of booking. Special conditions and seasonal surcharges to airfares and package prices may apply depending on date of travel. Flight times are subject to change by the airline. Please visit www.smarttraveler.gov.au or ring 1300 139 281 for information on current Government travel advice.

Cancellation policy

On International Flight tickets

- Please refer to your conditions of ticketing

On land package cost

- Between 64-31 Days: 65 % of land cost
- Between 30-16 Days: 75 % of land cost
- Between 15-1 Days: 100 % of land cost

Costs associated with the Asia In-Country Study Tours can be **tax deductible**. Educators may be able to claim their study tour expenses under a number of tax deduction categories which include: self-education expenses; excursions, school trips and camps if these trips have an educational benefit and are related to the curriculum or extra-curriculum activities of the school; acquisition of teaching aids used for curriculum development and teaching programs. Participants must contact their tax advisor or visit the [Australian Tax Office](http://www.australian-tax-office.gov.au) website to confirm eligibility. See also <http://www.zenorientaljournays.com.au> 'For Educators' pages.

How to book

To book for *The Mindful Journey through the Heart Study Tour...* please email

1. Lee Grafton (Zen Oriental travel) at lee.grafton@bigpond.com
2. **And cc** ...Jan Carey (The Mindful Classroom) themindfulclassroom@gmail.com

Lee will send you a booking form to begin the booking process.

I look forward to sharing this incredible mindful experience with you.

With much gratitude

Jan Carey 