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India Immersions Through Fairs and Festivals

TOUR OPERATOR | JAMES RUGGIA | AUGUST 13, 2015



PHOTO: The Pushkar Camel Fair will highlight an epic 19-day journey through India by Geringer Global. (Courtesy of Geringer Global)

A vacation abroad approaches the quality of a true journey to the extent that the traveler is able to engage with the people and the place that he or she is traveling in. That's as true if the journey is taking place in a wilderness or in the middle of a city. Most Americans travel to India to learn more about its vast cultural dimension with all of its social and religious complexity. The Pushkar Camel Fair and the Kalachakra Buddhist Festival present these two aspects of Indian culture in a very colorful way. Two tour companies are offering programs to these events that seem the ideal companies to experience these events with: Geringer Global to the Pushkar and

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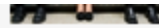


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Learning Journeys (a division of Perillo) to the Kalachakra.



Susan Geringer [has devoted her entire career](#) to understanding and exploring the complexities of India. Who better to go on a 19-day journey culminating in the Pushkar Fair? And you could the same about Learning Journeys' [Carolana Dimopoulos](#), whose dedication to yoga has made her an RYT-200 Kundalini Yoga instructor with additional certifications in Yoga 4 Cancer (y4c).

The Kalachakra Festival brings Buddhists from all over Asia. At a time when religious authority has squandered much of its actual spiritual authority in its pursuit of political objectives, the Dalai Lama still speaks with authority. Perillo Learning Journeys' nine-day Dalai Lama and Spiritual India Tour, running from Jan 12 to 20, will spend three days at the festival and gives its participants a chance to hear him talk on the power of meditation, prayer and rites to negotiate the "cycles of time." Guests will have the opportunity to attend Kalachakra sessions and to witness the Dalai Lama as he delivers preliminary teachings.

Other points of cultural immersion include a cooking lesson with a family, the chance to work in a Sikh community kitchen that serves thousands, do morning yoga sessions and to witness the ritual of the Ganga Aarti when the Ganges comes to life with floating lanterns. The tour also explores the Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple Complex, Humayun's Tomb, Qutab Minar and India Gate. A sunrise boat ride down the Ganges will help participants absorb it all.

Priced from \$2,175 per person double land-only, the package includes first-class accommodations, daily breakfast, select meals, transportation, guides, inter-India airfare and taxes. A \$350 deposit is required to reserve space.

In Delhi, the tour explores such sites as the Red Fort, Humayun's Tomb, Qutab Minar, India Gate, the majestic Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple Complex and includes a rickshaw ride through the Chandni Chowk of Old Delhi.

In Varanasi, India's most sacred city, which dates back to the 6th century BCE, guests go down to the ghats along the Ganges to witness the Ganga Aarti, a devotional ritual where locals light lamps made of candles and flowers and float them down the river resulting in a truly magical site. From there the journey heads into a luxury tented camp in Bodhgaya where guests will attend the Kalachakra festival, presided over by the Dalai Lama.

Wild Camel Fair


Every year, more than 400,000 people travel to Pushkar to witness the traditional trading of cattle and the accompanying festivities during the Pushkar Camel Fair. Geringer Global is offering a 19-day itinerary to India that spends two days at the fair. Guests who book by Aug. 31 will save \$250 per person for travel from Nov. 9 to 27. Pricing for this itinerary begins at \$5,160 per person double and includes transfers, all tours and activities listed in the itinerary, accommodations, some meals as listed in itinerary and taxes.


The trip begins in Delhi with a Chandni Chowk rickshaw tour then heads to Udaipur, where participants will have tea with a local family; explore temples and markets before taking a boat ride on Lake Pichola. From Udaipur the tour crosses the Aravalli Hills, the oldest mountain range in the world, on the trek to Sardargarh for a stay at the Sardargarh Heritage Hotel, located in a 16th century fort. Then participants join a Jeep safari seeking leopards and other wildlife.

In Jodhpur, the tour explores Mehrangarh Fort, Jaswant Thada Memorial, and the Clock Tower Market. In Nagaur guests tour Ahhichatragarh Fort, Nagaur Fort, Tarkeen Dargah, a Muslim site, and Jain Temple. The trip goes from Nagaur to the Pushkar Fair and then to Jaipur for a cooking demonstration and dinner with Thakur Durga Singh, current custodian of Dera Mandawa hotel. In Ramathra, guests take a walk through the village where they will witness residents tending crops, raising their children, singing traditional hymns and partaking in community activities.

The final stop is in Agra where guests will take high tea with a local family before embarking on the Kachhpura Heritage walk through agriculture fields and villages arriving just in time to watch the sunset over the Taj Mahal from across the river.

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