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Witness the Teachings of the Dalai Lama

A spiritual India tour will be offered by Learning Journeys this January

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Kalachakra Initiation Bodhgaya India. Ducoin David/Getty Images

Is India on your [travel to-do list](#)? Next year may be a good time to go. Perillo Tours' [Learning Journeys](#) is launching a very special spiritual program through India during the [Kalachakra Festival](#) presided over by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. On the nine-day journey, guests will visit the Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple

Complex, have the opportunity to help in the community kitchen at the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara, enjoy a cooking lesson with a local family, witness the spiritual ritual of the Ganga Aarti and spend three days at the Kalachakra festival, which is a world-renowned Buddhist festival, presided over by the Dalai Lama.

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Other highlights of the journey include a boat ride on the Ganges River at sunrise and tours of ancient sites such as Humayun's Tomb, Qutab Minar and India Gate.

The tour begins in Delhi, with visits to the Red Fort, Humayun's Tomb, Qutab Minar, India Gate and the majestic Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple Complex. Guests will then embark on a rickshaw ride through the bustling streets of Chandni Chowk. Participants will also have the opportunity to help out in the *langar* or community kitchen of one of the most prominent Sikh houses of worship, the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara. They feeds approximately 10,000 community members per day. Guests will also experience a [hands-on cooking lesson](#), learning to make traditional delicacies and learn about India's culture, customs and beliefs.

The next stop is Varanasi, one of India's most sacred cities – and one of the oldest cities in the world, dating back to the 6th century B.C. Guests will witness Ganga Aarti, a devotional ritual during which locals light lamps made of candles and flowers and float them down the river.

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The following morning, guests take a boat ride on the Ganges River to see the ritual baths of spiritual devotees against the backdrop of the rising morning sun.

After Varanasi, participants head to Bodhgaya to attend the Kalachakra Festival. Accommodations are in a luxury tented camp at the festival, presided over by the Dalai Lama. Kalachakra roughly translates to “Cycles of Time” and the event is centered around three cycles – external, internal and

alternative. The overall goal is to gain liberation from the material world through meditation, prayers and rituals. Attendees will be able to witness the Dalai Lama give his preliminary teachings while on the tour. The practice of Kalachakra tantra, like all Buddhist tantric systems, is based on first receiving the proper initiations. There will be approximately 11 initiations over the course of the festival.

The journey concludes with a return to Varanasi to visit Sarnath and the Sarnath Museum and return to Delhi for a tour of the Bharat Mata Temple before heading home. Unlike other temples in India which all house deities of gods and goddesses, the Bharat Mata Temple is the only temple dedicated to Mother India. The most peculiar thing about the Bharat Mata Temple is that it houses a relief map of India, carved out of marble.

The trip takes place Jan. 12-Jan. 20, 2016. Prices, not including airfare start at \$2,175 per person, double occupancy. There is a single supplement of \$900 for those traveling solo. The trip includes three nights in the luxury tented camp, five nights' accommodation in first-class hotels, daily breakfast, 2 lunches at a local restaurant, 1 dinner with a local family, lunches and dinners in Bodhgaya, air-conditioned transport van, English-speaking guides, intra-India airfare, one-hour yoga sessions in Varanasi and Delhi.

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