



NĀMARŪPA

TAMIL TEMPLE YATRA
JANUARY 6-21, 2016



❁ CHENNAI • TIRUVANNAMALAI • PUDUCHERRY • AUROVILLE ❁
CHIDAMBARAM • TIRUCHIRAPALLI • RAMESWARAM • MADURAI

Yatra, Tirtha, and Darshan

The ancient Puranas of India are huge volumes containing stories of the makings of the universe as well as thrilling tales of innumerable gods and goddesses. The geography of the Puranas coincides with that of the entire Indian sub-continent. Countless places mentioned in these ancient texts are fully alive today and are important places of yatra (pilgrimage). Within their sanctums, worship of the resident gods and goddesses is performed daily in a tradition that reaches back to antiquity and beyond. These places where the sacred stories unfolded are sometimes called tirthas. A tirtha is a place of crossing over and most literally refers to river fords. It also refers to a spiritual crossing place, where the divine is more easily intuited, recognized, or experienced. Daily, vast numbers of yatrīs (pilgrims) visit the sacred places to have darshan of their favorite gods or goddesses. Darshan is both seeing and being seen by the deity. It is a source of spiritual renewal. Nāmarūpa Yatras are centered around the experience of darshan.

Sadhana on a Nāmarūpa Yatra

Throughout the yatra, we hold early morning Mysore-style ashtanga yoga classes. Beginners will be guided through the basics. Yatrīs who practice a different style of yoga are welcome to do self-practice along with the group. We will practice sitting meditation and pranayama as much as is practically possible. We discuss Advaita Vedanta, the philosophy of non-duality. But we immerse ourselves in devotion through darshan of the deities of the temples we visit. Where we can, we sit in silent meditation to help still the mind. Meals are vegetarian and we abstain from alcohol and narcotics.

Daily schedule on Nāmarūpa Yatra

Days begin early with yoga class according to the Ashtanga Yoga system. After a South Indian breakfast, we venture out on a temple visit and spend some time exploring the temples and most importantly going for darshan. There will be a few temples where we are not allowed into the sanctums. In the afternoons there is time to rest, reflect, or explore on one's own. Our main meal is in the early evening. In the evenings, we sit for silent meditation and have talks about yoga and vedanta philosophy and aspects of the temple visits. Each locality has unique demands and changes to the schedule are made accordingly.

Nāmarūpa Yatra guides

Robert Moses is a veteran guide of multiple yatras through North and South India. On the yatra, Robert will facilitate talks and discussions on aspects of yoga philosophies, as well as on the myths and legends of the temples we visit. He will also lead silent meditation sessions. Robert has spent much time learning and travelling in India since 1982, including many years as a renunciate student of Swami Vishnu-devananda, teaching Yoga Teacher Training courses worldwide. He currently lives with his wife and three children in New Hampshire, USA. He is co-publisher, with Eddie Stern, of the journal, Nāmarūpa, Categories of Indian Thought. Nāmarūpa is the publishing wing of The Broome Street Temple, a 501c3 non-profit organization. www.broomestreettemple.org.

Christine Hoar is an authorized Ashtanga Yoga Teacher in the tradition of her guru, Sri K. Pattabhi Jois of Mysore. Christine founded Bristol Yoga in Vermont and now resides in Montauk, NY. She teaches Ashtanga Yoga classes, and leads retreats and workshops internationally. She is also an Ayurvedic consultant and offers consultations to improve overall vitality and health, using the tools of diet, daily routine, herbs, meditation, Pranayama and yoga.

Radha-kunda das is a renunciate disciple of Sri Radhanath Swami of Sri Sri Radha Gopinath Temple in Chowpatty, Mumbai, and is our indispensable guide, every ready with alternate plans as travel in India demands. He manages Sacred Journeys India which facilitates countless yatras all over India.

Photograph on **the front page** is the golden-tiled roof of the Chitsabai, or sanctum sanctorum, of the Thillai Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram. It is supported by four pillars representing the Vedas. The roof has been laid with 21,600 golden tiles with the word **sivayanam** inscribed on each of them, representing the number of breaths a person takes in a day. The tiles are fixed using 72,000 golden nails which represent the nadis in the human body. The roof is topped by a set of 9 sacred pots, or kalasas, representing the 9 forms of energy.

North Indian villagers on yatra in South India watch the sunrise on the beach in Rameswaram after their holy dip in the Bay of Bengal. Photos ©Robert Moses

To reserve
a place on the
Tamil Temple Yatra
2016, [click here to
register.](#)



January 6-21, 2016 • 16 days

Basic itinerary ~ page 4 for details

6 Wednesday Arrive Chennai

7 Thursday Chennai

8 Friday Tiruvannamalai

9 Saturday Tiruvannamalai

10 Sunday Tiruvannamalai

11 Monday Puducherry / Auroville

12 Tuesday Puducherry / Auroville

13 Wednesday Chidambaram

14 Thursday Chidambaram

15 Friday Tiruchirapalli

16 Saturday Tiruchirapalli

17 Sunday Rameswaram

18 Monday Rameswaram

19 Tuesday Madurai

20 Wednesday Madurai

21 Thursday Madurai - Chennai

\$2700 excluding int'l airfare.

Please see page 6 to learn more.



Annamalaiyar Temple,
Tiruvannamalai, South India.
Abode of the sacred Fire Lingam.
Photograph © Robert Moses

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TAMIL TEMPLE YATRA

JANUARY 6-21, 2016

Sunrise over the Bay of Bengal from the beach at MGM Resort south of Chennai.

6 Wednesday Chennai MGM Beach Resort

We'll pick you up from Chennai airport and take you to our comfortable lodging on the Bay of Bengal where you can relax and sleep off your international flight.

7 Thursday Chennai MGM Beach Resort

A full day to practice yoga, relax, and meet the group and your guides. Later in the day we can go shopping for suitable Indian-style clothing and to have darshan at the nearby, huge, ornate, Vastu-inspired ISKCON temple.

8 Friday Tiruvannamalai Sparsha Resort

Our first bus ride through beautiful South India with its verdant rice paddies and ancient rock formations to arrive at the base of the holy mountain Arunachaleswar.

9 Saturday Tiruvannamalai Sparsha Resort

After morning class and breakfast we will spend a good part of the day visiting the Annamalaiyar or Arunachaleshwara Temple. Here Lord Siva is worshipped as the Fire Lingam and his consort as the Mother Unnamulai. The temple covers 25 acres and the present structures date back to the 9th century CE.

10 Sunday Tiruvannamalai Sparsha Resort

The enlightened sage Ramana Maharishi spent many years on Arunachala mountain, considered to be a huge lingam of fire. In his early years he lived in a small cave on the mountainside and later moved to the base of the mountain where an ashram grew around him and where his samadhi shrine is located. We will visit all these places to meditate and reflect.

11 Monday Puducherry / Auroville Anandha Inn

Driving southward we come to the seaside town of Puducherry with its French colonial feel and ashram of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

12 Tuesday Puducherry / Auroville Anandha Inn

Auroville, is an international township founded in 1968 for people to live in harmony and unity. We can take yoga class at Ashtanga Yoga Auroville, visit Matrimandir, shop for crafts and relax on the beach.

13 Wednesday Chidambaram Saradadham Hotel

After class and breakfast, a short drive will bring us to the town of Chidambaram (the Sky of Consciousness) where the Tillai Nataraja Temple is located. Here Lord Siva is worshipped as the element akasha, or 'space', and also as Lord Nataraja, or the cosmic dancer, with his consort Sivakami. There is also an important shrine to Lord Vishnu as Govindaraja. The temple is maintained by a special caste of brahmins known as Deekshitaras who will be our hosts while visiting the temple and taking part in worship.

14 Thursday Chidambaram Saradadham Hotel

In the morning we will attend a homa (sacred fire ritual) within the temple precincts performed by the Deekshitaras. The Deekshitaras follow ancient customs and are organized according to a democratic system whereby lots are drawn to perform the rituals and manage the temple.

15 Friday Tiruchirapalli Hotel

After class and breakfast, we will pass through Thanjavur and visit the amazing Brihadeeswarar Temple which is today a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of India's architectural wonders. We will reach Tiruchirapalli in time to climb the Rock Fort to the Ganesha Temple and watch the sunset over the Kaveri River.

16 Saturday Tiruchirapalli Hotel

The Kaveri is the most sacred South Indian river along which are countless temples and shrines. The largest is Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam which covers 156 acres and is the most impor-

tant of the 108 main temples of Lord Vishnu. It has seven enclosing walls, or prakaras, and 21 towers known as gopuras. Lord Vishnu is worshipped as Ranganatha, in a reclining form.

17 Sunday via Karaikudi to Rameswaram Jivan Residency

After class we travel southwards through the Chettinad district of Tamil Nadu where we will take a night halt. Known for its 18th century mansions and aromatic cuisine influenced by the Chettiar traders' contact with Burma, this is a little travelled region of South India.

18 Monday Rameswaram Jivan Residency

Rameswaram is on Pamban Island and is considered one of the four most sacred places (char dham) in all of India. Here Lord Rama prayed to Lord Siva upon his return from Sri Lanka where he slew the demon king Ravana and rescued Sita. The Ramanathaswamy Temple is one of the 12 Jyotir Lingams of India and has 22 sacred water tanks within its precincts, surrounded by lengthy temple corridors. Here, worship and darshan of the Lingam are preceded by an ocean bath followed by a holy bath at each of the 22 wells. There are many temples and tanks associated with stories from the Ramayana around Rameswaram.

19 Tuesday Madurai Hotel

After class and breakfast, we will take a bus ride to Madurai, home of the Meenakshi Sundareshwar Temple at the heart of this town.

20 Wednesday Madurai Hotel

Visit the Meenakshi Sundareshwar Temple. Many hours can be spent wandering the temple complex. Surrounding the temple are shops and bazaars. Enjoy a farewell South Indian feast in the evening.

21 Thursday Madurai - Chennai

After class and breakfast and fond farewells, we will return by flight to Chennai to connect with our flights back home. 🙏



Deekshitar priests perform a homa in the Thillai Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram during the Nāmarūpa Sadhana Yatra 2013 .Photograph ©Michelle Haymoz

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TAMIL TEMPLE YATRA

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Included in the cost of \$2700

We want to keep your expenses reasonable but your stay comfortable. Lodging will be Indian-style, comfortable but not luxurious. Meals will be South Indian vegetarian. Internal travel will be by comfortable vehicles (A/C mini-vans) and one economy flight. The cost includes accommodation, two full vegetarian meals and a light snack each day. The cost also includes pick up and drop off from the airport.

Not Included in The Cost

International air-fare to and from India (contact us for recommended flights if required), visa costs, airport taxes, tips, temple fees and offerings. Additional collections will be made for tipping bus drivers and assistants, and to engage local priests or guides. Drinking water, laundry and all personal requirements during the yatra are not included in the cost of the yatra.

Reservations

To secure a place on the yatra we require a non-refundable deposit of \$108 per person along with your registration form. Once you have made a reservation and sent a deposit we will assist you with further information regarding international flights, visas, immunizations, suggestions for on-going travel should you stay for a longer period, and other travel requirements. We also send a suggested reading list, a packing list, information about temple visits and travel in India.

Full payment will be due by October 1, 2015.

Reservation Form & deposit payment:

[Click here to register.](#)

If you prefer you can fill in and print out the reservation form and mail it along with a check or money order made payable to Namarupa and to Namarupa, P.O. Box 271 Dublin, NH 03444, USA.

Balance Payments:

Balance payments by check or money order please. We can accept credit card payments via PayPal. However PayPal takes a large percentage for the convenience of using their services. We will be obliged to add their fees to your payment if you pay via PayPal with a credit card. All banks charge wire fees which will also be added to your payment if you pay by wire transfer. Contact us for wire information.

Refunds

A fifty-percent refund, excluding deposit, will be made up to November 15, 2015. No refunds thereafter. Since the cost is based on group participation, no refunds can be made for any features not taken. If cancellation occurs while the yatra is in progress there will be no refund for any unused portion.

Visas

Indian visas are required for US citizens. Citizens of other countries should check. Visas are obtainable online through www.travisa.com or www.in.ckg.us and must be obtained at least a month before departures. For more information about the new visa-on-entry program please see <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in>

Immunizations

No immunizations are required but several are recommended by the Atlanta Center for Disease Control.

On Yatra in India

The main purpose of our pilgrimage is to visit important temples and to have darshan of the resident devatas. Our days will be structured around temple visits, each with its own unique devata, local customs and timings. This will take some getting used to and much of what we experience will be new and outwardly unfamiliar; by trying to be as much part of it as possible, we will be able to let go and experience the inner connections. To this end, we will follow local customs and dress codes. For temple visits, women should wear either salwar kameez or saris and men can wear dhotis if possible or salwars and kurtas. These can be purchased in India.

As noted above, we will arrange comfortable lodging, meals and travel. That being said, standards in India are different to Western standards so please be prepared for the unexpected. Travelling in India requires patience, flexibility and humor.

The hot climate, food, accommodation, dress and customs will all require some adjusting, not to mention the sheer mass of people, persistent beggars, all manner of traffic and the accompanying dust, air pollution, and noise levels the like of which are not often encountered in Western countries. These can be overwhelming for the first-timer to India, but Her incredible hospitality, warm humanity and abundant spirituality always come through and touch everyone in a deep and mysterious manner.

Indian food is delicious and traditionally light and nutritious. But it can be very spicy. We will be adjusting as much as we can to make it easier on our digestive systems. Bottled water is available everywhere. We will be moving fairly frequently since there is much to see and do, but we will try to pace our days and take our time.

Health Concerns

This is not a strenuous trip but you will be subject to jet lag, hot humid climatic conditions, fairly bumpy bus rides, dust and air pollution, very different food, crowds of people, unfamiliar sites and sounds. These all take their toll. And on a subtler level, darshan in the temples is often a powerfully moving experience and hidden feelings and emotions can be brought to the surface. Bring what comforts you in the way of any health needs or medications: anti-diarrhea tablets, mosquito repellent, sun block, basic first-aid items, etc. We also recommend bringing tea tree oil, Bach Rescue Remedy, and hand sanitizer. In case of emergencies, doctors and pharmacies can be found. If you have any medications that you need you must bring them with you. Contact us if you have any special health concerns.

What to Bring

Even though you can check 2 bags on your international flight, domestic flights only permit 1 check on bag and there is an enforced weight restriction. Anything over this restriction, you will have to pay accordingly. We strongly advise that you maintain the weight limits. Check on Bag: 33 lbs (15 kg) - easiest if this is a medium sized wheeled bag; Carry on Bag: 15 lbs (7 kg) Your carry on can be a small backpack.

Passport and money must be kept secure in a neck pouch or money belt. Have a copy of the info page of your passport. Call your bank to tell them that you are traveling in India at such and such dates so they do not block your ATM card for cash. There are ATMs everywhere and they are the easiest way to get Rs. Carry about \$200 US cash for any emergencies.

You will be able to purchase temple-appropriate clothing in India. Bring about 4 changes of clothes with you, preferably lightweight, light color cotton to keep cool in the heat. Men should wear long pants and cotton shirts. Women should wear salwar kameez or saris, or long skirts. It's recommended to bring sandals that are easily taken on and off; flip-flops work well. At most places we will be able to get clothes washed. Other items to bring include: Light yoga mat, modest yoga practice clothes (please), lightweight rain jacket, small flashlight or head lamp, water bottle, clothesline and pins, camera, computer, ipad, mobile etc. A travel umbrella is great for both rain and heat. A sun hat or scarf is a good idea. Try to travel as lightly as possible.

Nāmarūpa, Categories of Indian Thought:

Another important aspect of this yatra will be to gather audio-visual and literary material that may appear in future issues of Nāmarūpa. Your ideas and input are very welcome. 🙏



Sparsha Hotel
Tiruvannamalai



Yatis and Deekshitar priests in the Thillai Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram, during the Namarupa Sadhana Yatra 2012-13. Photograph ©Michelle Haymoz