

- Mysore and Kerala - culture, yoga and spa retreat

Day 01 Mon 11 Feb 2008 Arrive Bangalore. Welcome to India. You'll be met on arrival and assisted to for the transfer to your hotel. At leisure to rest and relax. Overnight Bangalore, the Taj Residency Hotel, deluxe room.

Day 02 Tue 12 Feb After breakfast today you'll be transferred from your hotel to Mysore - 139 km and a 3-4 hr drive). On arrival you'll be able to check in to your base for your stay in Mysore, at a private home within the beautiful neighborhood of Gokulam. Gokulam is a suburb of Mysore, away from most of the noise, traffic and pollution of the city, and considered to be one of the prime residential spots. Characteristic signs of India are ever present there but it is a much more comfortable and homely area to live in. Perhaps the best element for the yoga student staying in this neighborhood is the freedom and ease to walk to yoga, walk to lunch, walk to a friend's place, walk to evening chanting or walk to the corner store or Internet for your basic requirements.

As mentioned, much neighborhood walking, even strolling, can be done yet, on your own scooter, or by enjoying a 10-minute rickshaw ride gets you in to the "city." So all in all the neighborhood is much "calmer," as Guruji would say, but also quite accessible to whatever you want to do in Mysore.

After settling in, enjoy an afternoon guided walking tour of Mysore with the aim of introducing you to the local area and providing orientation for your stay.

After returning to the "Yoga One House" the rest of your evening is at leisure to rest and relax. Overnight Mysore, at your new 2 week home away from home.

Day 03 Wed 13 Feb - 6am -9am Morning yoga and meditation - Study Ashtanga Yoga with Sharath at the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (www.ashtanga.com) - (own arrangements). Or morning vinyasa practice at the house with Sally, Steve or another teacher.

(Please note that from the home, rickshaws into Mysore are available at a cost of approximately \$1 each way. The Ashtanga Yoga Research Center is within Walking Distance).

Late morning at leisure.

After lunch/afternoon optional half day tour to Chamundi Hill to visit the temple to the Goddess Chamundi, a form of the female Power Shakti. The temple commemorates her victory over the demon bull Mahishasur after whom Mysore is named. Coming further down the hill is a statue of the largest Nandi Bull (the vehicle of Shiva) in India. Towering at a massive 5 meters and carved from a single rock in 1659 this sculpture is a must see.

Return to Mysore, Yoga One House with the rest of your evening at leisure.

Day 04 Thur 14 Feb 6am –9am Morning yoga and meditation – Study Ashtanga Yoga with Sharrat at the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (www.ashtanga.com) – (own arrangements) Or morning vinyasa practice at the house with Sally, Steve or another teacher.

Late morning at leisure.

Afternoon optional half day Mysore Museum Tour – Mysore has many interesting museums and art galleries. The Railway Museum has a 19th century specimen that the queen used, complete with a western style commode so she could ease herself with ease. The Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery has a fabulous collection of Raja Ravi Varma's, opulent paintings of royalty and scenes from the myths, as well as some Nicholas Roerich pieces. The Folklore Museum has an interesting collection of folk toys and weapons and the Art and Archaeology Museum has some precious antiques.

Return to Yoga One House with the rest of your evening at leisure.

Day 05 Fri 15 Feb 6am –9am Morning yoga and meditation – Study Ashtanga Yoga with Sharrat at the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (www.ashtanga.com) – (own arrangements) Or morning vinyasa practice at the house with Sally, Steve or another teacher.

Afternoon at leisure or optional half day visit to the famous Mata Amritanandamayi ashram in Mysore as well as a number of smaller local ashrams.

Return to Yoga One House after the tour and rest of your evening at leisure.

Day 06 Sat 16 Feb Full day excursion to Byalkuppe Tibetan settlement where His Holiness the Dalai Lama visits during the winter months for a few days. It is approximately 75 km from Mysore and around 2 hours driving time. During your tour you'll be able to visit the monastery and settlement as well as the Tibetan Handicraft centre at Byalkuppe. As well as your guided tour you'll have time to explore on your own today.

Late afternoon/early evening return to Mysore with the rest of your evening at leisure. (Transfer by coach each way).

Day 07 Sun 17 Feb – Morning vinyasa practice at the house with Sally, Steve or another teacher. Morning at leisure and afternoon half day tour to Mysore City Palace.

The Mysore Palace, now a museum, is a richly decorated and gilded palace constructed with a myriad of domes, turrets, colonnades and arches and houses many treasures and works of art in luxurious rooms where even the walls are painted with pictures of the Dasera processions. Sundays are the best time to visit as the palace is illuminated, with a vibrant festival feeling as locals and tourists take Sunday evenings to stroll the palace grounds.

Return to the Yoga One House/Mysore where the rest of your day is at leisure.

Day 08 Mon 18 Feb 6am –9am Morning yoga and meditation – Study Ashtanga Yoga with Sharrat at the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (www.ashtanga.com) – (own arrangements) Or morning vinyasa practice at the house with Sally, Steve or another teacher.

Late morning at leisure.

Late afternoon/early evening optional visit to Brindavan Gardens – half day tour. Located 19km and just 30 minutes from Mysore, the gardens are famous both for their terraced gardens and for their musical fountains – coloured footlights light up the shooting fountain sprays that dance to accompanying music. The site has also been used as a location for Bollywood film and music shoots and is particularly picturesque in late evening when the lights come into their own.

Return to Mysore and rest of your evening at leisure.

Day 09 Tue 19 Feb 6am –9am Morning yoga and meditation – Study Ashtanga Yoga with Sharrat at the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (www.ashtanga.com) – (own arrangements) Or morning vinyasa practice at the house with Sally, Steve or another teacher.

Afternoons at leisure/excursions. Evenings at leisure.

Day 10 Wed 20 Feb 6am –9am Morning yoga and meditation – Study Ashtanga Yoga with Sharath at the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (www.ashtanga.com) – (own arrangements) Or morning vinyasa practice at the house with Sally, Steve or another teacher.

Optional full day excursion to Belur and Halebid.

Belur was the first capital of the Hoysala dynasty and is now known for its exquisite temples, of which the Chennakeshava Temple is a fine example. It took 103 years to complete and the façade of the temple is covered with intricate sculptures and frescoes, which are awe-inspiring in their workmanship. In the temple are hand-lathe turned filigreed pillars, each different from each other. Veerananarayana Temple and the smaller shrines are also well worth a visit.

From Belur we'll continue to Halebid, 27 km northwest of Hassan and site of the Hoysaleswara Temple with its wealth of sculptural detail, the walls covered with gods, goddesses, animals and dancing girls. No two facets of the temple are alike. Guarded by a Nandi Bull, it was never completed, despite 86 years of work. It is the most outstanding example of Hoysala art. Halebid also has a smaller temple called Kedareshwara and a little-visited enclosure containing three Jain bastis (temples) with fine carvings.

Late afternoon/evening return to Mysore and rest of your evening at leisure.

Day 11 Thur 21 Feb 6am –9am Morning yoga and meditation – Study Ashtanga Yoga with Sharrat at the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (www.ashtanga.com) – (own arrangements) Or morning vinyasa practice at the house with Sally, Steve or another teacher.

Afternoon and evening at leisure before departing Mysore tomorrow.

Day 12 Fri 22 Feb This morning you'll be picked up from the Yoga One House for the transfer drive from Mysore to Bangalore domestic airport for the afternoon flight (departs 1300 arrives 1355) to Kochi. Also known as Cochin, Kochi is a vibrant city on the south west coast of India in the beautiful state of Kerala often referred to as 'God's Own Country' and the Gateway to Kerala as well as the must see places in the world.

On arrival you'll be met for the transfer drive to Allepy where you'll board a traditional rice houseboat for a relaxing afternoon and evening cruise along the stunning Kerala backwaters. Travelling along the waterways is a wonderful way to relax and to experience local life and nature along and on the river. Evening dinner and overnight on board the houseboat.

Day 13 Sat 23 Feb This morning we'll arrive at Kumarakom where your cruise ends. After breakfast we'll pull up the jetty of Kumarokam Lake Resort where you'll disembark and be able to check in to this beautiful and relaxing spa resort.

Rest of your day at leisure to rest and relax, perhaps explore the local area or enjoy some of the spa treatments, yoga or meditation programs available.

Overnight at Kumarokam Lake Resort.

Day 14 Sun 24 Feb Today is a full day at leisure to rest and relax. Overnight at Kumarokam Lake Resort.

Day 15 Mon 25 Feb - Morning transfer from Kumarakom to Cochin in time to transfer to the airport to connect to your departure flight back home/or onwards to Goa.

Optional Goa Extension - details to follow

Goa extension trip - available on request for 01 or more nights

From \$250 per person per night, including airport transfer on arrival and departure by private air conditioned car and based on twin share accommodation at the five star deluxe Cidade De Goa hotel, Goa's premier beach resort staying in a deluxe room and including all local taxes.

Single occupancy accommodation also available and alternative hotels available. Please contact us for details.

Day 15 Mon 25 Feb – at leisure

Day 16 Tue 26 Feb – – at leisure

Day 17 Wed 27 Feb – – at leisure

Day 18 Thur 28 Feb – transfer to airport for departure flight home