



## Yoga Journey to Northern India

Namaste,

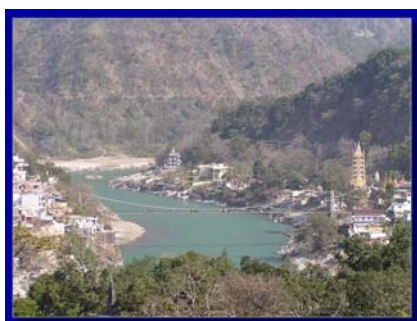
Thank you for your interest in traveling to India with us this year! We are deeply honored to welcome you to grow in your knowledge and experience of traditional Ashtanga (8 Limbs) Yoga on the holy banks of the river Ganga at Rishikesh, and Haridwar, Uttaranchal—and to invite you to deepen your appreciation of Indian cultural landmarks at the historical cities of Delhi and Agra in Uttar Pradesh.

Our retreat in Rishikesh is held at the beautiful Parmarth Niketan Ashram, and is highlighted by seminars on the complete system of Yoga given by Sadhvi Abha Sarasvati (Mataji) and Phoenix Artemisia. Twice-daily practice will include intensives in pranayama, mantra, mudra, and meditation. There are also daily inspired talks on Yogic philosophy. We will explore the universal Yoga teachings in rounds in the way it has been traditionally taught—"from mouth to ear", illuminating and discussing the teachings of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the Bhagavad Gita. Following the philosophy class, Mataji lends her angelic voice to instruct students in the practice of Vedic (Sanskrit) Chanting.

There are several guided outings occurring on our 14-day adventure. The first, just up the Ganga to the cave of sage and scholar Vasistha, will occur after retreatants have had four days to settle in and get to know the lush, bountiful area of Rishikesh, located in the Himalayan foothills along the Ganga river. We also take a half-day exploring the "Beatles Ashram", that of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a great influence in bringing the teaching of Transcendental Meditation to the West. This beautiful historic ashram is surrounded by the incredible Himalayan forest, with a diverse abundance of trees and exotic flowers and rare butterflies. For those who like to hike

and explore, a jaunt up to a blissfully serene waterfall continues just past the ashram grounds, and we get to take in a fantastic walk through the trees and catch views of the Ganga from the mountainside.

The tempo of the retreat is designed to give you the full benefit of expanded sense of relaxation and a pace of self-directed activity (participate in as much as you like) within an intensive program of practice. On full practice schedule days, there are approximately 6 hours of designated seminars and classes to choose from. To enhance your welcome to Rishikesh and give you an experience of the benefits of Ayurvedic techniques for healing, you will also enjoy a 2 ½ -hour Abhyanga massage and Shirodhara treatment—to be scheduled at your convenience—by the experienced and healing hands of Ayurvedic clinicians at the Jeevaka Institute around the corner from the ashram. During your free time you may want to visit several of the wonderful and historical ashrams and temples within walking distance of Parmarth Niketan, small sandy beaches where you can commune with the river, and a waterfall further back at Chat Phooli ashram. The majority of our retreat time is spent in Rishikesh on the Ram Jhula side of the Ganga, where no cars are allowed--- so there is a wonderful sense of freedom to explore the area by pedestrian means, and quiet starry nights to spend on the ghats (piers) by the powerful riverbanks.



The streams of Life are but One river in the play of the Divine Mother Ganga

The Ganga river is called "Ganga Ma", or Mother Ganga, by many and has been worshipped as the compassionate, benevolent life-force of the Divine Mother by Yogis and wise people of all traditions from time immemorial. The river's breadth and effulgent current is quite incredible—the Ganga is sourced higher up in the Himalayas at Gangotri where it pours out of the icy mountains, and travels across nearly all of Northern India to empty into the Bay of Bengal. As the largest river in India it has yielded inspiration for the sacred practices of Yoga to evolve over the last 3000 years and perhaps longer, uninterruptedly. Being that Rishikesh is relatively

closer to the source of the Ganga, it is considered safe for the traditional purifying bathing rite (or dipping of feet!) if you are so moved, and this practice is considered to cleanse one of one's ignorant actions or wrongdoing and remove obstacles.

Rishikesh is a pilgrimage town where there is no meat and no alcohol available for consumption. Women and men dress modestly (no bare shoulders on men or women, no shorts or cleavage revealing tops for women) to respect the traditional atmosphere of a pilgrimage town and the Indian custom of dress.



All of the rooms at Parmarth Niketan that retreatants stay in have a view of the Ganga and have private bath and showers. Single rooms are available by request. Delicious vegetarian meals are prepared with the highest standards and purified water is available for you at several sources on site for drinking. Ashram grounds have impressive gardens maintained by residents and students and are laden with rose and hibiscus, housing statutes of deities, saints, and Gurus. Several Murthis -- shrines, considered to be the living emanation of the Deity-- exist on the grounds, where pilgrims come to visit each day at various hours to pray and worship. Thus, at Parmarth you will experience the devotional culture of the ashram community and be welcome to attend all of the functions held on the grounds, including evening Aarti at the banks of the river. Aarti is a ceremony of offering light to the Ganga and involves lots of conscientious merriment, singing bhajans (devotional songs) with the Parmarth residents and locals---including the 100 or so rishikumar children who inspire and elevate everyone by singing their hearts out at this deeply nourishing evening event. Parmarth was the first ashram in Rishikesh to welcome foreigners to the Ganga Aarti, allowing people from all over the world to connect with a sense of the international human spiritual family.

The retreat will conclude it's portion in Rishikesh at Parmarth after one week, and we'll journey on to Haridwar for two days and nights.

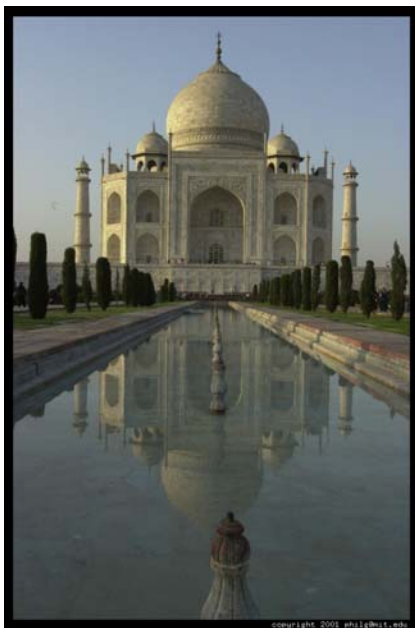


Fountain depicting Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati:  
the Givers of transcendence, transformation and freedom (above),  
Lord Vishnu with Goddess Lakshmi:  
the Bestowers of health, wisdom and prosperity (below) at Parmarth ghat

Haridwar is north and west of Rishikesh and is one of the sites of the massive Kumbh Mela spiritual gatherings that happen every 4 years. It has an ancient history of divine events and holy people related to the propagation of the Yoga teachings. We will stay in a renovated mansion of a Maharaja (former regional King) in Haridwar, at the beautiful Haveli Hari Ganga.

Our time in Haridwar will be marked by several excursions and lots of practice opportunity by the Ganga. On the way in we'll visit a 300-year old Jain temple made of carved Rajasthanian sandstone. On the first evening we will attend the Ganga Aarti ceremony at the river where thousands gather each night to sing, pray, and offer flowers to the river. The next day will be spent taking a trip to the Rajaji wildlife reserve by special jeep tour where one can see wild elephants among other beautiful and rare birds, and leopards have also been seen here in the wild. There is an option to visit the oldest Shiva temple in Haridwar---Daksha Mahadev --on an afternoon on our second day. On our two days in Haridwar there are two morning and one afternoon Yoga intensive offered in the artful Yoga room located literally next to the flowing river Ganga, where our practice is suffused in it's energy and song.

Towards the end of our journey we will visit the stunning Taj Mahal in Agra. The Taj Mahal was one of the seven wonders of the world and was built by Shah Jahan in 1630 as a monument to his wife, who died in childbirth. Sculptors, masons, craftsmen, and calligraphers were called from Persia, the Ottoman Empire, and Europe to work on construction of the Taj Mahal-- making it an international art project and tribute to Love. It is encrusted with minerals and gemstones, woodwork and detail down to the square inch. The below information is copied from a website on the Taj, [www.indianchild.com](http://www.indianchild.com):



The architectural complex of the Taj Mahal comprises of five main elements: the *Darwaza* or main gateway, the *Bageecha* or garden, the *Masjid* or mosque, the *Naqqar Khana* or rest house, and the *Rauza* or the Taj Mahal mausoleum. The actual Tomb of Mumtaz is situated inside the Taj. The unique moghal style architecture combines elements & styles of Persian, Central Asian, and Islamic architecture. Most striking are the black and white chessboard marble floor, the four tall minarets (40 m high) at the corners of the structure, and the majestic grand dome in the middle. On closer inspection, the lettering of the Holy Quran verses around the archways appear to be uniform. The lettering spacing and density has been customized to give this impression to the viewer. The impressive *pietra dura* artwork includes geometric elements & style, plants & flowers, which are common in Islamic architecture. The level of sophistication in artwork includes a 3 cm decorative element containing more than 50 inlaid gemstones.

In Agra we also visit the architectural feat of the Red Fort, which is a 400 year old administrative and residential complex of Emperor Shah Jahan and his family. The Red Fort, with its numerous pillared halls and two mosques, serves to impress with its' balance of the formidable and elegant architecture. We also visit the Black Taj Mahal, and the "Moon Garden" behind the greater Taj Mahal, whose incredibly manicured grounds are a garden of delights filled with frangipani, roses and jasmine .



We return to Delhi and have the last day to choose to explore a temple of the Goddess Kali, and explore the bazaars and emporiums for treasures to take home. Our retreat ends with an evening of performances of Indian regional dances and a final farewell dinner together. Most international flights from Delhi leave very late in the evening or very early on the following morning to get you back home.

Round-trip flight tickets are included in your retreat tuition and are economy class seats. If you would like to upgrade to first class, please let us know at your earliest convenience upon registering. Travel arrangements can be made for you to leave later if you'd like to continue to explore India on your own or with friends. We have taken great care to craft a journey for retreatants that we believe is richly infused with intention for your growth and careful attention to the details of a safe and comfortable trip. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have further questions about the Yoga Journey to North India this October. We look forward to facilitating a rich exploration of Yoga, Indian history and culture, and the unforgettable people of this land for you.

Yours, in dreams of India!

Namaste,

Phoenix Artemisia