UCLA Alumni

Palaces and Forts of Rajasthan
October 26 - November 7, 2018
Led by Dr. Saba Soomekh
UCLA Faculty on Tour

DR. SABA SOOMEKH
Near Eastern Languages and Cultures
Saba Soomekh received her BA in Religious Studies from the University of California, Berkeley. She received her Masters in Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School and her Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Dr. Soomekh teaches and writes extensively on world religions, women and religion, and women's literature from South Asia and the Middle East. Dr. Soomekh lived, studied, and traveled extensively in India, specifically in the Punjab region studying under Dr. Gurinder Singh Mann (UCSB) and professors from Punjab University in Chandigarh, India. Her area of focus was Persian and Punjabi mystical poetry and the history of the Persian empire in South Asia. She teaches and lectures on the domestication of religion, ritual practice, and gender identity of women in India, Iran and Israel. Dr. Soomekh has been teaching at UCLA since 2010.

INDIAN GUIDE

Vikram Singh Jodha hails from Udaipur, Rajasthan and has been a professional tour manager and licensed Ministry of Tourism tour guide for 10 years. Vikram has a degree from the M. S. University of Baroda in Indian history, specializing in the areas of North India, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Besides specializing in India history he possesses an in-depth knowledge and a vast amount of experience guiding international travelers throughout India.
Dear UCLA Alumni and Friends,

India is a nation unlike any other in the world, where contrasts are a daily part of life in one of the world’s most populous nations. Rich in heritage, culture and deep seeded religious beliefs, the welcoming people of India not only survive, but thrive among their diversities. Join us for this unique opportunity to immerse yourself in the local culture and rhythms of daily life in India as we discover the rich beauty of the state of Rajasthan. Meet with craftspeople, weavers and artisans who will share their centuries old traditions and explore Mughal era palaces and forts including the Monument to Love, the Taj Mahal.

The journey begins with two nights in Delhi, the capital, divided into the historic Old Delhi and New Delhi designed during British colonial time. Discover both sides of the city before flying to Varanasi, India’s holiest Hindu city, sitting on the banks of the mighty Ganges River and where Buddha gave his first sermon. After an evening of classical Indian dance, fly to Agra, the seat of the Mughals in the 16th and 17th centuries, to experience the sun setting over the gleaming white surface of the Taj Mahal. En route to Jaipur, the flamboyant capital of Rajasthan, explore the ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri. Discover the extraordinary architecture of the Pink City including the magnificent Palace of Winds. Drive through the semi-arid Shekhawati region where dazzling murals cover havelis, ornately decorated residences. End the trip with an overnight in Samode Palace, a fortified Rajput stronghold, with an elaborate farewell feast. Return to Delhi for onward flights.

Join Dr. Saba Soomekh for an in-depth look at this vibrant and stunning area of India, one of the most fascinating countries I have personally visited.

Sincerely,

Christel Aragon
Director, Alumni Travel

For more information contact us at 310-206-0613 or travel@alumni.ucla.edu.
October 26, Friday
DEPART

Depart the US on a flight to Delhi.

October 27, Saturday
DELHI

Arrive in Delhi and after clearing immigration and customs transfer to the deluxe Taj Mahal Hotel located in the exclusive residential area of Lutyens’ Delhi.

October 28, Sunday
B,L,D
DELHI

Begin touring Old Delhi this morning with a visit to the Red Fort followed by a bicycle rickshaw ride to India’s largest mosque Jami Masjid, the spiritual center of Shahjahanabad where the faithful stream in and out from the surrounding bazaaars.

Visit Raj Ghat the black marble memorial to Mahatma Gandhi.

Enjoy lunch at Chor Bizarre which serves authentic regional Indian cuisine in a unique atmosphere.

After lunch, subject to special permission, visit Rashtrapati Bhavan, the official residence of the President of India.

End the day with a visit to the most grandiose and elegant Victorian section of New Delhi which contains the majestic government buildings conceived by Sir Edwin Lutyens and assisted by Herbert Baker.

This evening enjoy welcome dinner at a fine specialty restaurant.

October 29, Monday
B,D
VARANASI

After breakfast transfer to the airport for a flight to Varanasi.

Varanasi, also known as the City of Light, is India’s holiest Hindu city with a spiritual and religious legacy that goes back nearly 3,000 years. The sacred Ganges River and the 90 or so ghats along the river define the life and identity of Varanasi.

Upon arrival transfer to the Gateway Hotel Ganges View, located in the Nadesar Palace grounds in 40 acres of greenery.

In the evening enjoy a rickshaw ride through the bustling bazaars to the Ghats to watch the Ganga Aarti, a much awaited daily ritual, where the river Ganga is propitiated for all the bounty that she bestows on the Indian plains. When dusk sets, the steps of the
Ghats on the riverfront of the Ganges are illuminated with earthen lamps and marigold flowers.

**October 30, Tuesday**  
**VARANASI**

In the morning participate in a private Yoga and Meditation session.

After breakfast, visit the nearby Sarai Mohana weavers’ village, well known for its silk weaving. The Banarasi sarees made by these weavers are among the finest sarees in India.

In the afternoon, drive to Sarnath where in the 6th century BC Siddhartha Gautama - who came to be known as the Buddha, the “Awakened One” - gave his first sermon and set in motion the Wheel of Law. Also visit the Archaeological museum.

After visit the Banaras Hindu University, one of the largest campus universities in India, founded as a center for the study of Sanskrit, Indian art, music and culture. Continue on to the new Vishwanath Temple which is one of the most revered pilgrimage sites for Hindus.

End the day at the Bharat Mata temple which features a huge map of undivided India carved in marble instead of traditional statues of Hindu gods and goddesses.

In the evening enjoy a Kathak Dance performance in a local theatre, one of the major classical Indian dance styles.

**October 31, Wednesday**  
**AGRA**

In the early morning enjoy a boat cruise on the river Ganges and also walk through the old bazaars.

After breakfast transfer to the airport for a flight to Agra.

Arrive in Agra and transfer to The Courtyard Hotel. Set amidst landscaped gardens, this tranquil retreat is located nearby the glittering monument of love, the Taj Mahal.

Sunset visit to the Taj Mahal, when the monument appears to change its hue, tinted by the glow of the setting sun.

**November 1, Thursday**  
**AGRA**

Today visit the mausoleum of the most distinguished Mughal emperor Akbar at Sikandra. The complex features a huge “Gateway of Magnificence” - a composition in deep-red sandstone and white marble designed by the emperor.
Enjoy lunch at the famous south Indian vegetarian restaurant Dasa Prakash.

Discover the Agra Fort situated on the banks of river Yamuna. This imposing structure of palaces, mosques was founded by the Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1565.

Later enjoy the Heritage Walk of Agra which highlights the vast range of architectural styles, planning elements and ornamental details. Begin at the magnificent Jami Masjid in a decorated horse cart or Tonga and end at the Kinari Bazaar.

Dinner tonight is at your leisure.

**November 2, Friday  B,L**

**JAIPUR**

After breakfast drive to the ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri, a former capital of the great Mughal emperor Akbar. After laying silent for four centuries, it is almost perfectly preserved.

Drive to Bharatpur for lunch at the Laxmi Vilas Palace.

Drive scenic Rajasthani countryside to Jaipur, the flamboyant capital of the state of Rajasthan. On arrival check-in to Jai Mahal Palace, a magnificent palace hotel set amidst 18 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens.

This evening enjoy an optional visit to the Raj Mandir Cinema, an opulent cinema, inside and outside and the place to go if you want to see a Bollywood movie.

**November 3, Saturday  B,L,D**

**JAIPUR**

Today drive north of Jaipur to visit the Amber Fort, the ancient capital of the Rajputs from 1037 until 1728. Ascend the Fort on elephant back and visit Amber’s magnificent palaces. The building of the fort palace was started by Raja Man Singh, a Rajput general in Akbar’s army in 1600.

In the afternoon visit Sanganer, located south of Jaipur, which is famous for artistic hand block printing on fabric. Original Sanganeri impression work is normally done by hand and the village has been engaged in this traditional art for over 500 years.

In the evening enjoy private cooking demonstration and traditional dinner at Kalwara House located in the old city of Jaipur.

**November 4, Sunday  B,L,D**

**MANDAWA**

In the morning visit Jaipur’s most famous monuments the Palace of Winds and the Jantar Mantar Observatory both within the
City Palace Complex, at the heart of the Pink City.

Afterwards drive through a semi-arid Shekhawati region to Nawalgarh which features the finest Shekhawati frescoes in the entire area. Nawalgarh is often known as an open art gallery and features several havelis (traditional mansions) and a majestic fort.

Enjoy lunch followed by a traditional Rajasthani puppet show.

Enjoy a walking tour of the most prominent havelis in Nawalgarh including the eight Aath Havelis. The havelis are known for their unique frescos with each of the havelis representing a different painting style from the different eras.

End the day at Mandawa and check-in to Castle Mandawa, the residence of a former noble in the Jaipur court and today a Heritage Hotel.

Dinner at the hotel tonight.

**November 5, Monday**  
**Mandawa**  
**B,D**

Named after the 15th century ruler Rao Shekha, the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan is the homeland of many wealthy Marwari families. Over time it became fashionable for the rich and famous of Shekhawati to build large mansions or Havelis and more interestingly to adorn them with ornate frescoes.

Traditional homes are built around, and all family activities revolved around the chowk, or courtyard which also serves as a light well and a ventilation system for the hot and dry climate.

Between 1830 and 1930 Marwaris commissioned artists to paint embellished frescoes on the walls depicting images of gods, goddesses, animals, scenes from the British colonization and the life stories of Lords Ram and Krishna. Today visit famous frescoed havelis in the towns of Laksmangarh, Fatehpur, Jhunjhunun, Churu and Ajitgarh which surround Mandawa.

Enjoy a special dinner this evening including a performance by a fire dancer accompanied by the beat of traditional drums.

**November 6, Tuesday**  
**Samode**  
**B,L,D**

This morning visit the village of Samode. This village with its local artisans producing printed cloth and glass bangles nestles picturesquely within the dry rugged hills of the northern Aravali.
Upon arrival at Samode Palace Hotel enjoy lunch at the hotel.

This afternoon explore the remarkable Samode Palace fabulously decorated with fine Shekhawati style wall paintings. Initially Samode Palace was a little more than a fortified stronghold in the rugged Rajput tradition. Only in the early 19th century under Rawal Berisal did the castle begin to take on the lavish aspects it is now known for.

Afterwards visit some of the studios of local craftspeople before returning the hotel.

This evening enjoy a very special evening on a private terrace at the Samode Palace. Receive a royal welcome, including dancers, fireworks and an elaborate dinner.

**November 7, Wednesday**

After breakfast return to Jaipur and visit a workshop that produces the stunning turquoise-blue pottery that Jaipur is famous for. The blue pottery of Jaipur is unique in appearance. The best pieces are hand painted with conventional floral or arabesque patterns and sometimes with figures of animals.

Transfer to the airport for a flight to Delhi and to connect with international flights.
RESERVATION FORM: Palaces and Forts of Rajasthan

Send to: UCLA Alumni Association
Attn: Alumni Travel
James West Alumni Center
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1397
Fax: 310-209-4271 - Email: travel@alumni.ucla.edu

UCLA Alumni Travel is a benefit of the UCLA Alumni Association.
Gold, Life or Blue Membership. Please select an option below.

☐ I am currently a (circle one) Gold* / Life*, Blue Member of the UCLA Alumni Association.

☐ I have enclosed a check made payable to the UCLA Foundation for:
  ☐ $1,000 Gold Membership
  ☐ $100 Blue Membership

Detailed Alumni Association benefit information can be found at alumni.ucla.edu/benefits.
* The UCLA Alumni Travel benefit has been grandfathered in for existing Life Members. Life Membership is not currently available for purchase.

Name exactly as it appears on your passport

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Email:

Street Address:

City State Zip

Home phone: Cell phone: Sharing with: (Form sent separately)

Preferred name(s) for your name badge(s):

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Room Arrangements

☐ I would like to request a single room at an additional $1,710

☐ I would like to share my room; please try to find me a roommate (shares cannot be guaranteed)

Reservation Deposit

☐ I have enclosed a deposit of $500 is required for each participant

☐ I have enclosed a check made payable to (PER PERSON)

(please make checks payable to Distances Horizons)

☐ I want to reserve my place with a credit card deposit.

Please charge $ to my credit card listed below

Card #  

Expiration Date / /  Security Code

Signature as it appears on your card

(Your signature)

Reservations are subject to availability and processed on a first come, first served basis. Reservations to be paid in full 60 days prior to departure, Aug. 17, 2018. Final payments must be made by check only.

We have read the tour conditions and responsibility clause and agree to adhere to all (all participants must sign).

Signature Date

Signature Date

Terms, Conditions, and Inclusions

Reservations and Deposits: Reservations for this tour require a deposit of $500 per person and an application fee of $100 per participant. Final payment is due by Aug. 27, 2018 and must be paid by check, wire transfer, or credit card.

Tours: Distances Horizons offers a variety of accommodations in hotels as outlined in the itinerary based on double occupancy. Programs listed are based on two persons sharing a twin room. Distances Horizons reserves the right to substitute hotels for those named in the brochure when necessary. Distances Horizons will do all that is possible for single participants to satisfy requests to be placed in a single occupancy room. A single supplement cost will be quoted. If a single room is or cannot be made available, the single room supplement will apply. If Distances Horizons assigns you a roommate and your roommate cancels or shares with you, you may be responsible for the single room supplement.

Meals: All American breakfast (B), lunches (L) and dinners (D) are included as specified in the itinerary. Bottled water is included at each meal.

Accommodation: Including group airport transfers to and from hotels for those on the suggested group flights, economy class airfare for internal flights, entrance fees to monuments, bottled water kept on the bus, transportation in a deluxe, air-conditioned motor coach, the services of a tour director, and other local Indian tour manager throughout, special activities as quoted in the itinerary, and all incidentals as specified in the itinerary. Tours are priced per person and are not available for inclusion meals. With a minimum group size of 15 travelers, the trip will be accompanied by Dr. Saba Sonnenshein. For an in-depth look at the itinerary, please visit our website and see our list of excursions and activities to find out how to obtain your Indian visa. Costs as of Jan. 1, 2018 are subject to change without notice. Distances Horizons cannot be held responsible in any way for any cost incurred if they are denied entry into the country upon arrival even with a valid visa. It is the traveler’s responsibility to verify that all details of their visa are correct.

Cost: Based on rates of currency exchange at time of printing (January 2018) and is subject to change with or without previous notice. If there is a price increase prior to the day of departure, the basic costs, increases may be passed on to the participant. If bookings fall below the minimum required, passengers will be advised of additional costs for that departure date. The minimum group size of this departure is 15 paying participants; should the number of participants fall below this number, a small group surcharge and/or reservation fees will apply. Please wait for written confirmation from Distances Horizons before purchasing any airline tickets. Four Price Does Not Include: international air travel to and from Delhi, meals and drinks not specified in the itinerary, international airport transfers, hotel attendant gratuities, personal items such as laundry, email, fax or telephone calls, liquor, room service, independent and private transfers, and excess luggage charges. Any increases in the in-tour airfare (included as part of the program cost), security, or fuel surcharges imposed after the initial pricing of this program are not included. Cancellations: Distances Horizons and the UCLA Alumni Association reserve the right to cancel any tour prior to departure for any reason, including insufficient number of participants, and to decline to accept or retain any person as a participant at any time. Should this happen, refunds will be made without obligation, although we cannot be held responsible for any additional costs already incurred by participants. If a participant cancels, the following refunds will be available upon written notice of cancellation to Distances Horizons:

- Notice more than 60 days prior to departure: a refund less a $150 cancellation charge.
- Notice on or between 60 days and 30 days prior to departure: a refund less 50% of trip price.
- No refund shall be issued if cancellation is received less than 30 days prior to departure.
- No refunds shall be issued after the tour has commenced.
- No refunds shall be issued for occasional meals, sightseeing tours or any unused services.

Responsibility: The liability of the UCLA Alumni Association as sponsor, and Distances Horizons as tour organizers, shall be limited as set forth in the UCLA Alumni Association act only in the capacity of agents for their respective companies, railroads, ship lines, or owners or contractors providing accommodations, transportation or other services. As a result, all carriers, receivers or ticketed are subject to the terms and conditions specified by the supplier. By acceptance of tour, the participant agrees that Distances Horizons or UCLA Alumni Association nor any of their subsidiaries shall become liable or responsible for any injury to person or property of any person by reason of any carelessness, negligence, delay or irregularity caused by persons or programs not controlled by Distances Horizons or UCLA Alumni Association, or for any cause other than the direct fault of Distances Horizons or UCLA Alumni Association, and passengers will be advised of a comparable replacement should tour terminate. Distances Horizons and UCLA Alumni Association are not responsible for any additional expenses or liability sustained or incurred by the participant.

General: The person named in the registration, on whose behalf payment has been furnished, is the sole owner of all payments on this tour. Any and all decisions regarding the rights of California residents to make a claim or request for return of deposits or any other adjustment under these terms and conditions are subject to the judgment of the courts of the State of California, to which the parties have consented to the exclusion of the laws of any other state. Distances Horizons and UCLA Alumni Association cannot be held responsible for unfavorable weather or closure of access routes due to bad weather conditions. Distances Horizons and UCLA Alumni Association cannot be held responsible for tour director or leader cancellations, and passengers will be advised of a comparable replacement should tour terminate. Distances Horizons and UCLA Alumni Association are not responsible for any additional expenses or liability sustained or incurred by the participant. Tour participants acknowledge receipt of a copy of these terms and conditions and agree to be bound by all terms and conditions as set forth herein on behalf of all participants who may use or for whom said services are offered by Distances Horizons. Any disputes arising related to payments on this tour shall be settled in the courts of the State of California. Information regarding the rights of California residents to make a claim may be found at turainb.org. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account. This application has a trust account.
Tour Highlights

• Bicycle rickshaw rides through Old Delhi and Varanasi.
• Classical Kathak dance performance.
• Sunrise boat cruise on the Ganges River.
• Sunset visit to the Taj Mahal.
• Heritage walking tour through Agra.
• Explore the ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri.
• Ascend Jaipur’s Amber Fort on elephant back.
• Traditional Indian food cooking demonstration.
• Walking tour of the unique Nawalgarh havelis.
• Rajasthani puppet show in a beautifully painted haveli.
• Village visit of traditional craftspeople.
Tour Price: $5,795 per person, double occupancy
Single Supplement: $1,710 (Limited availability)

Includes:
- Accommodations based on double occupancy in hotels as listed.
- The following flights in economy class: Delhi/Varanasi; Varanasi/Agra; Jaipur/Delhi
- Meals as listed in the program – with bottled water at each meal.
- All sightseeing and entrance fees listed
- Transportation in a private air-conditioned bus with bottle water
- Arrival and departure transfers if arriving and departing on the designated group flights.
- A Distant Horizons, local Indian tour manager who will accompany throughout.

Does not include:
- International airfare to and from India
- Visa and passport fees
- Travel insurance
- Drinks other than bottled water with meals
- Excess luggage charges
- Laundry charges
- Communication (phone, fax and internet) charges
- Items of a purely personal nature
- Any items not listed
Journey with us to discover the rich culture, beauty and elegance of Rajasthan!