

Spirituality and Sustainability in Nepal and India

Week 1: Arrival and Program Orientation: Kathmandu Nepal

Departing from the US, we'll fly into Kathmandu where we will spend our days orienting. Your home will be a cozy Tibetan neighborhood of Kathmandu famous for its large Stupa. You and your group will spend some time getting acquainted with the culture and forming group norms that will serve you throughout the duration of your semester. For day activities, you might learn about Buddhism at a local monastery or take a Tangka painting class, in addition to seeing the sites in Kathmandu and learning about the diversity of communities who call Nepal home.

Weeks 2: Community living and Sustainable Impact

Leave the bustling city behind and climb above the clouds to the remote village of Takure and home to Conscious Impact, a collective of individuals from around the world who want to have a positive impact through sustainable development and regenerative models of service. Partnering with a local community, your time here will be spend learning and taking part in various community projects: from a youth empowerment program to regenerative agriculture and much more, you will learn about efforts to preserve both land and culture.

3 night trek of the Himalayas in the Nagarkot region: Following your time in Takure, your group will embark on a Himalayan trek in a region that is famous for its views, including that of Everest. After rewarding days of trekking, your group will sleep in tea houses and you will get a sense for the kind local communities in this area.

Week 3: Spiritual Communities and Education

After a rewarding trek make your way across the Kathmandu Valley to the Aurobindo Ashram. An ashram is a spiritual community and this one is famous for its children's home, and sustainable practices. Growing their own organic food and making most of their goods, this ashram is a great place to experience the warmth of community living while seeing how they have adopted practices to allow them to be self-sufficient. Your days here will be spent engaging with the kids and families who call the ashram home. You will get the opportunity to learn about philosophy and engage in yoga, meditation, and traditional arts.

Week 4: Delhi and the Taj

Following a wrap up of your time in Nepal, your group will make your way to Delhi, the capital of India. Large and dynamic, with an eye to the future and a grounding in the past, your group will spend a few days exploring Delhi and meeting with local non-profits that are working to address social issues. From there, take the train to Agra where you will see the Taj Mahal and travel to the holy cities of Mathura and Vrindavan where you will see life on the ghats in a living spiritual city.

Week 5-6: Udaipur and Village Homestays

Catch an overnight train to Udaipur, a lake city in the desert state of Rajasthan. Here, you will

engage with a group that is re-imagining a more just and equitable society, through educational, social justice and sustainable initiatives. Your days will be spent learning about the different initiatives and getting to take part in a handful of activities; from miniature painting, to visiting a jail university to making products for an eco boutique and much more. Your friends from Udaipur will also be arranging a village homestay in a nearby community that is connected to a women's empowerment program.

Week 7: Bangalore and Protovillage

Catch a flight to Bangalore, the silicon valley of India, where you will have a day or two to explore this dynamic city. Filled with youth from throughout India, this city is famous for its coffee shops and hip culture. In addition to exploring the city, you will spend a day in Bannerghatta National Park, where you will partner with Wildlife SOS, an Indian wildlife conservation organization. You will learn about their efforts and see their sloth bear rescue center. While in the park, you will likely see elephants, tigers and much more.

From Bangalore, take a short drive up to Andhra Pradesh. Here you will get to spend an inspiring week with Protovillage, a community that is prototyping sustainable solutions for villages throughout India. Combining traditional wisdom with modern technology, the people who live in Protovillage are at the forefront of innovative and sustainable community living. You will get to engage with them in their many initiatives from permaculture to natural building. In the evening, the young members of the community gather to skate. Return back to Bangalore for a final night before heading farther down south.

Week 8: Madurai Yoga Ashram and Western Ghats Trek

Catch a train from Bangalore to Madurai, a temple city in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. After briefly getting to explore the city, you will make your way to an Ashram, a spiritual community, where you will spend a few days learning about Hindu philosophy and devoting your day to working on a disciplined practice of yoga, meditation, chanting and selfless service.

From the Ashram, the group will start the drive up to the green and lush hills of Munnar in the Western Ghats. Experience the biodiversity of this region as you trek for three days through the famed tea and cardamom plantations that dot this region. You will also learn about the local flora and fauna.

Week 9-10: Kochi Homestays and Student Directed Travel.

Wind your way down from the Ghats, past the backwaters, to the charming coastal city of Fort Kochi. In this old spice trading town, inhabited over the centuries by traders and conquerors from all over the world, you will learn about the spice trade and how its fortunes made the city. Here, your nights will be spent in homestays with local families and your days exploring artistic internships, like: ayurveda, yoga, tabla, sitar, traditional dance, cooking and much more. The choice for internships are yours. In this cultural capital there is never a dull moment, and there are always lots of events taking place that you will get to join in on.

The final few days of your program will be for Student Directed Travel. For this portion, you and your peers will use your travel savvy skills to design and plan an itinerary in southern india. Will

you go to the mountains or find a chill town on the beach? The choice is up to the group, who will be responsible for making all of the arrangements in consultation with your leaders.

For the final few days, make your way back to Fort Kochi where you will have some special closure activities before catching your flight home.

****Carpe Diem reserves the right to make changes to the program at any time, and indeed has the responsibility to do so in some instances; changes may be required to provide the best possible experience, protect the safety of participants, or respond to changes in weather or political conditions.***