



***Tantra* – Exploring the roots of mysticism in India**

Presented by MoonRings, Inc, in conjunction with Creative Travel India Pvt. Ltd.



The word "tantra" is derived from the combination of two words "tatva" and "mantra". "Tatva" means the science of cosmic principles, while "mantra" refers to the science of mystic sound vibrations. Tantra therefore is the application of cosmic sciences with a view to attain spiritual ascendancy. In another sense, tantra also means the scripture by which the light of knowledge is spread. The main deities worshipped are Shiva and Shakti. The most vigorous aspects of ancient wisdom tradition (evolved as an esoteric system of knowledge) are in the Tantras.

We will visit sites including important Tantra and Yogini Temples. We will intersperse our travel with three discussions on different religions in India, Hinduism and Tantra. These discussions will be preceded by a talk on each subject by an eloquent and knowledgeable expert chosen from our pre-selected panel of experts.

Tantric Tour of India Highlights

- Discover the spiritual wealth of major faiths of India: Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism
- Visit to alcohol-friendly temple of Delhi
- Explore the haunted towns of North India
- Explore the Pink City of Jaipur and ride on elephant back to the famed Amber Fort
- See the amazing Taj Mahal at dawn
- Visit the Kama Sutra Temples of Khajuro, including a special lecture
- Experience amazing Sarnath, where Buddha gave his first speech after attaining enlightenment
- Attend Hindu prayer ceremony at the ghats along the Ganges River
- Perform Puja at the holy ghats of Varanasi
- Meeting with the mystic sadhus of the city
- Learn, about the "Kali", known as mother goddess and granter of siddhis (magical powers).
- Bhubaneshwar – City of temples
- Last but not the least – Kamakhya temple of Guwahati, known among sages for the practice of Tantra...and much more!

Itinerary	<i>Tantra – A way of exploring the roots of mysticism.</i>
	Delhi – Jaipur – Agra – Khajuraho – Varanasi – Kolkata – Bhubaneshwar – Guwahati - Delhi
	16 nights – 17 days
	Day 1 to Day 3 : In Delhi

Day 1: Arrive In Delhi & transfer to the hotel for Overnight Stay

Day 2: Lecture on religion called “Tantra” followed by visit to an ancient temples in Delhi



Tantra is a type of religion that was once popular in Sanskrit circles. Shakti is the main god and anyone who worships Shakti is regarded as a Tantric follower. Followers believe that the universe was created because of divine energy and that Shakti takes care of the world. They also believe that humans have parts of this energy within themselves and by channelling that energy they become more spiritual, creative and in touch with their surroundings.

The basic belief focuses on the prana, which is the divine energy or power. They believe that this power exists in all forms, including inside each person. By harnessing that energy, they can achieve their own goals be it spiritual or physical. Gurus help each follower harness their power and focus their energies. They utilize different tools to make this happen.

One of their greatest tools is yoga. Tantra focuses on the idea that the body has different chakras located within it, though many of these aren't used. Those who meditate and focus on their body while doing yoga can harness the power of their chakra and center themselves. The heart and head are both examples of chakra. They also use mantras or chanting during yoga, which allows them to clear their mind and focus only on their goals or what they want.

Post lecture, visit Bhairavji Temple, where the main deity is known as a liquor friendly God and granter of Tantric Siddhis.



This temple is dedicated to **Bhairavji**, an fierce incarnation of Lord Shiva, also known as the destroyer among the Hindu trinity of Gods. There is a story around that the temple or at least its core dates back to the time of Indraprastha (at least 400 BC).

Conclusion can be derived that the basis of the temple might be of that era, even though the building itself is not very old. The most amazing aspect of this temple is that the reigning deity is not offered milk as is usual in Shiva temples, instead it is given alcohol. There is, however, a regular temple here too called the "Dhudhiya Bhairon", where one can offer milk.

Later visit **Kalka or Kalkaji Mandir** which is amongst the oldest and the most revered ancient temples of India. The temple is dedicated to goddess Kalka or Kali, an incarnation of Durga. It is also called 'Jayanti Peetha' or 'Manokamna Siddha Peetha'. 'Manokamna' literally means desire, 'Siddha' means fulfillment, and 'Peetha' means shrine. So, it is believed to be the holy shrine where one gets the blessings of Maa Kalika Devi (Goddess or Mother Kalika) for the fulfillment of one's desires.



Day 3: Practice Yoga: Tantra and Yoga are essentially contrary entities. While Tantra believes in non-dualism, Yoga propounds a dualistic philosophy of renunciation. However, these two systems do have some things in common. Yoga is a kind of tantra only, where we aim to achieve bodily control through certain physical postures and mind control techniques.

The simple use of tantra in an ordinary person's regular worship include the use of certain bodily postures like prostrating before the deity, the lotus position, the folding of hands in front of the deity, purification of the body through fasting and bathing, concentration of the mind on the image, breathing practices, thought control through inner detachment, detachment of the body and the mind through devotion and so on. In pure devotional forms of worship, the body and the mind are offered to God as an act of supreme sacrifice and inner detachment, thereby allowing the divine forces to descend and do their work of inner purification and transformation.

Full day city tour of Delhi covering Jama Mosque, Humanyus' Tomb and Qutab Minar.

Day 4 to 5 : Jaipur and around

Day 4: Drive to Jaipur via Bhangarh

Visit the most haunted fort of India - **Bhangarh Fort.**



Bhangarh is a place between Jaipur and Delhi in Rajasthan state of India known for its ruins. Bhangarh is also a pre-historic site. The town was established in 1573 (VS 1631) during the rule of Bhagwant Das as the residence of his second son, Madho Singh, the younger brother of Emperor Akbar's general, Man Singh I. Madho Singh participated in many campaigns with his father and brother. The next ruler of Bhangarh was his son Chhatr Singh, after whose death in 1630, Bhangarh slowly declined. When the Mughal Empire became weaker after the death of Aurangzeb, Jai Singh II attached Bhangarh to his state by force in 1720. After this, Bhangarh diminished in population, and since the famine of 1783 (VS 1840) the town has remained uninhabited.

Day 5: Amber Fort excursion & City tour.

Proceed to visit the **ancient capital of Amber** to see the fabulous Amber Fort. Maharaja Mansingh, Mughal Emperor Akbar's most successful General, started the construction of Amber Fort in the 17th century.



Before the City Palace was constructed in Jaipur, Amber was the seat of power. The fort is surrounded by fortified battlements and overlooks the Moat Lake. Ruins and remains are spread over the Aravalli hills and sprawling crenulated walls lattice the surrounding area.

In the afternoon, you will visit the city of Jaipur. Among the highlights to be seen while touring Jaipur include the City Palace, which is an overwhelming complex of exquisite palaces, gardens and courtyards, decorative art and carved doorways. The palace museum houses collections of rare manuscripts, armoury, costumes, carpets and miniature paintings. Walk to the adjacent Jantar Mantar or Astronomical Observatory made by the Maharaja of Jaipur, built in 1726 and is one of the five such astronomical wonders built by Sawai Jai Singh and **makes accurate predictions even to this day**. You will also have the opportunity to wander about the local markets. Return to your hotel after the sightseeing tour of Jaipur City.

Also visit Palace of the Winds, otherwise known as Hawa Mahal. It is actually an elaborate facade behind which the ladies of the court used to watch the daily goings on in the street below. It is extremely intricate in its pink sandstone carving. The cool wind blows through its facade of windows and latticed screens through which the queens of the court once viewed the streets of the city.

Day 6 & 7 – Agra and around

Day 6: Drive to Agra, enroute visit Mehendipur Balaji Temple & Ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri (7-8 hours)

The name Balaji is applied to Sri Hanuman in several parts of India because the childhood (Bala in Hindi or Sanskrit) form of the Lord is especially celebrated there. Unlike similar religious sites it is located in a town rather than the countryside. Its reputation for ritualistic healing and exorcism of evil spirits attracts many pilgrims from Rajasthan and elsewhere

One can witness people going through various physical therapies like keeping heavy stones on their body, on arms, legs and chest, to ease their pain. There are others who inhale the smoke that fumes out of the sweet Patasa's kept on smoldering cowpats. The ones with a serious case of spirit possession, who tend to get violent, are even shackled in chains within the temple premises. This may appear a bit anachronistic at the first glance, but thousands of people are believed to have been cured in this way



Post temple visit continue your drive towards **Fatehpur Sikri**, the deserted red sandstone city, built by the Great Mughal Emperor Akbar as his capital and palace in the late 16th century. It was abandoned soon after it was built when the local wells went dry and it remains today in much the same condition that it was over 300 years ago. It is complete with palaces and mosques and used to be a town larger than London when it was originally

constructed. Now it is an extraordinary place to wander around with its buildings in near perfect condition.

Day 7: Catch a glimpse of world renowned Taj Mahal & Agra Fort.

Proceed for a **sunrise tour of the Taj Mahal (closed on Fridays)**.



The Taj Mahal is everything that has been said about it and more. Taking 22 years and 20,000 men to build, the white marble was quarried 200 miles away and was transported to the site by a fleet of 1000 elephants. Built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan as an expression of his love for his wife Mumtaz Mahal, in mid-17th century, the Taj Mahal is truly one of the wonders of the world. Though the Taj appears to be amazingly perfect from almost any angle, it is the close-up marble inlay work, which is really astounding. You will have ample time to view and be mesmerized by this

outstanding piece of architecture.

Also visit the **Agra Fort**, an outstanding example of Mughal architecture. Agra Fort - the seat and the stronghold of the Mughal Empire under successive generations. This was the seat of Mughal rule and administration and the present structure owes its origins to Akbar who erected the walls and gates and the first buildings on the eastern banks of Yamuna River. Shah Jehan added the impressive quarters and the mosque while Aurangzeb added the outer ramparts. Visit its Hall of Public Audience and its Royal Pavilions

Day 8 & 9 – Orchha & Khajuraho

Day 8: Board train to Jhansi and drive to Kahjuraho enroute visit Orchha.

Day 9: Visit the temple of Khajuraho and lecture on Kamasutra

Khajuraho Temples are famous for their **erotic sculptures**.

In the realm of architecture, Khajuraho holds a unique position. The temples here were built between 950 and 1050 A.D. by the Chandela dynasty, who claims descent from the Moon God and a mortal, Hemavati, with whom the god fell in love.



Most of the temples of the north were destroyed by invaders, but Khajuraho escaped and stands today as an island of beauty. The Chandelas built 85 temples and some 22 survive today. Architecturally the temples have some unique features. They stand on high platforms and do not have customary enclosures. Each temple has a large number of spires in ascending order representing man's aspirations towards spiritual goals. They are ornately carved, with each frieze and sculpture depicting the genius of the men who carved it and the king who inspired them.

Although famous for erotic depictions, these form only a small part of the wealth of the site. Taken in totality, the sculptures of Khajuraho depict the everyday life of the people and the court in the 10th and 11th centuries.



Kamasutra is an ancient Indian text widely considered to be the standard work on human sexual behavior in Sanskrit literature written by Vātsyāyana. A portion of the work consists of practical advice on sexual intercourse. It is largely in prose, with many inserted anustubh poetry verses. "Kāma" which is one of the four goals of Hindu life, means sensual or sexual pleasure, and "sūtra" literally means a thread or line that holds things together, and more metaphorically refers to an aphorism (or line, rule, formula), or a collection of such aphorisms in the form of a manual.

Day 10 & 11– Varanasi & Kolkata

Day 10: Fly to Varanasi. Later visit Sarnath and attend glorious Aarti on Ganges Ghats



In the afternoon, arrive Varanasi - the 'eternal city', and Hinduism's most important city, located on the banks of the sacred River Ganges, has been the center of learning & civilization for over two thousand years.

Evening proceed to witness the Aarti ceremony on Ganges.

Day 11: Sunrise boat ride & private puja (religious ceremony) on the ghats (steps leading to the water) with city tour including visit to Aghori Ashram. Later, fly to Kolkata.

Very early in the morning you will take a boat ride along the bathing ghats on the Holy River Ganges. At sunrise the Hindu faithful flock to the river to cleanse themselves of their sins. You see the cremation ghats and the Deswameedha ghats. To die in Varanasi is to end the Hindu cycle of re-birth, thereby making it a popular place to end one's life.

Thus we take you to see the most profound ritual of passage on the Manikarnika Ghat. You will be introduces to the history and mythology associated with this Ghat. Also understand the rites being performed and see the inner workings of this unique place.

Perform an exclusive puja on the Ghats of Ganges by performing **Yajna** (a ritual of offerings accompanied by chanting of Vedic mantras) The ancient Rishis or sages had broadly categorized wisdom into three streams of knowledge, namely, Ayurveda (involved with the gross physical body), Yoga (exercises for the subtle body or spirit) and Tantra (involved with mental and metaphysical abilities).

Mantras - Mantras or chants help him visualize and evoke the divine power, giving it form and potency. Mantras also help the follower harness the true power of cosmic vibrations. Daily Mantroccharana (chanting of Mantras) helps the aspirant create a strong identification with deity, so that the form becomes his "Ishta-Devata" or "prime meditational deity".

Mudras - Tantriks believe that Mudras or gestures further enhance his attempts at attaining control over himself and over the mystical forces of nature as well.

Mandalas and Yantras - Mandalas and Yantras, which are various diagrammatic representations of the forces of the universe, are believed to further aid the seeker and help him achieve spiritual and magical powers.

Later, enjoy city tour of Varanasi, including a visit to the **Benaras Hindu University**, the **Bharat Mata Temple** & one of the **Aghori Ashram (Kinaram Ashram)**



Aghori is a Shaivite Hindu sect – mostly composed of ascetic sadhus – believed to have split off from the tantric Kapalika order (which dates from 1000) in India in the 14th century[citation needed]. The Aghori are known for their extreme and outlandish violations of typical Indian and other social mores, as well as their unorthodox, taboo rituals which have caused many mainstream Hindus to condemn them as non-Hindu.

Evening: Fly to Kolkatta

Day 12 –In Kolkata

Day 12: Visit Dakshineshwar Kali & Kalighat temple with city's ancient buildings.



Begin your day with visiting one of the most important pilgrimage site “**Dakshineshwar Kali**” which is situated on the eastern bank of the Hooghly River, the presiding deity of the temple is Bhavatarini, an aspect of Kali, meaning, 'She who liberates Her devotees from the ocean of existence.

Kalighat is regarded as one of the **51 Shakti Peethas** of India, where the various parts of Sati's body are said to have fallen, in the course of Shiva's RudraTandava. Kalighat represents the site where the toes of the right foot of Dakshayani or Sati fell.

Not only temples that you see being in this historic city but along St. George's Gate Road, on the southern fringe of the Maidan, your sight is arrested by a splendid monument in white Makrana marble bought here from Rajasthan. Built in Italian Renaissance cum Saracenic style, the Victoria Memorial was planned by Lord Curzon and opened by the Prince of Wales in 1921. This British attempt at building a second Taj Mahal, is dedicated to Queen Victoria and houses a fantastic collection of rare memorabilia from Colonial days. A light and sound show recreates history every evening.

Visit the Indian Museum built in 1875. It is an impressive building in the Italian style of architecture. This is the largest museum in the country. The Museum has six sections: Art, Archaeology, Anthropology, Geology, Zoology and Industry (Economic Botany).

Day 13 & 14– In Bhubaneshwar

Day 13 : Fly to Bhubneshwar and visit the temple city.



The capital city of Orissa, Bhubaneshwar is most famous for its temples (there are over 700, mostly devoted to Lord Shiva) including the largest temple in the state -- the Lingraj Mandir. The motley collection of caves cut into the hillside on the outskirts of the city are another popular attraction. They were once home to Jain aesthetics. The most interesting ones can be found at Udayagiri (Sunrise Hill). The complex is open from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. If you're interested in natural medicine, the ethereal Ekamravan garden of medicinal plants is notable and well worth visiting.

Day 14: Visit Vithal & Chaunsath Yogini Temple and attend the session on secrets of Tantra.



Post breakfast proceed for the visit of the 8th-century Vaital temple which has a reputation of being a powerful tantrik center. Inside the temple stands the mighty Chamunda (Kali), wearing a necklace of skulls with a corpse at her feet. Tantriks find the dimly lit interior of the temple an ideal place for absorbing age-old currents of power that emanate from this spot

Later visit one of the most impressive yogini temples in Odisha is the 9th century CE hypaethral Chausathi yogini (sixty-four yogini) temple located at Hirapur in Khurda district, 15 km south of Bhubaneshwar. Another hypaethral sixty-four yogini temple in Odisha is the Chausathi yogini pitha in Ranipur-Jharial, near Titilagarhin Balangir district.



Lecture on Tantrism : Because Tantra is a mystical subject, it is nearly impossible to define. Even eminent scholars have had a hard time explaining what Tantra actually is. The different explanations of Tantra indicate its multifaceted nature. Tantra is a spiritual science, which means it is also mystical, in its interconnectedness, the holistic wisdom link between ourselves and the universe we inhabit. There is a misconception among many that tantra is used by Tantrics only through the medium of sex and other objectionable means. This is not true. Tantra is used in every aspect of Hindu worship. What we see in Tantricism is an extreme form of tantra where the body and the mind are allowed to express themselves freely under the supervision of an enlightened master to come to

terms with them and achieve complete mastery over them. But tantra in its milder and normal forms can be seen in action in everyday life. The Tantric heritage and its pluralistic culture presents a great synthesis of Hinduism in its perfection. One strand of the Tantras is traced back to the Vedas. Another Strand of Tantra emanates from a non-vedic scriptural corpus, the Agamas, Apart from these two traditions, the Tantras incorporated several beliefs and practices of the indigenous oral-based cultures. Thus, in the course of its development Tantra absorbed knowledge of different Shastras within its fold, such as astrology, ayurveda, vastuvidya, yoga, ethnobotany and the occult sciences. The Tantric form of practice influenced all sects and sub-sects of Indian origin. So we have Buddhist, Jain and even Muslim forms of Tantra. The influence to Tantra is not limited to India alone; there is ample evidence that Tantrism in some form or other travelled to various parts of the world, especially Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan and parts of South-East Asia.

Day 15 – In Guwahati

Day 15: Fly to Guwahati and drive to Kamakhya Temple.



the bowel of earth, is located
flowers, is kept the matra yoni.

Kamakhya is at the center of the widely practiced, powerful tantrik cult in India. It is situated in the northeastern state of Assam, atop the Nilachal Hill. Tantrik Hinduism, nurtured by generation after generation of tantrik priests, has flourished at Kamakhya down the centuries. It is one of the 108 Shakti Peethas of Goddess Durga. Legend has it that Kamakhya came into existence when Lord Shiva was carrying the corpse of his wife Sati, and her yoni (female genitalia) fell to the ground at the spot where the temple now stands. The temple is a natural cave with a spring. Down a flight of steps to a dark, mysterious chamber. Here, draped with a silk sari and covered with

Day 16 –Fly to Delhi

Day16: Fly to Delhi and Overnight at the hotel

Day 17 –Depart Delhi

Day 17: Transfer to the International Airport to board your flight back home.