

ALC Garden Tours

*In conjunction with the*

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY



## INDIA & SRI LANKA

### Tour Itineraries

4. INDIA: Jewels in the Crown 8 – 24 February, 2020

5. Treasures of Sri Lanka 24 February – 3 March, 2020

These exclusive tours provide outstanding introductions to the complex cultures of India and Sri Lanka. With a special interest in landscapes, gardens, the arts and history, we experience many highlights of India.

These are journeys of the mind – rich in layers of history and cultural interest.

Historic properties, gardens and designers – many are unique with fascinating owners, and which are not available to the public.

For information: phone Warwick Forge (043 818 2801) [warwick@bloomings.com.au](mailto:warwick@bloomings.com.au)  
[www.alcgardentours.com](http://www.alcgardentours.com)

## SUMMARY

THESE TOURS PROVIDE AN INTRODUCTION TO OUTSTANDING HIGHLIGHTS OF INDIA - surely, the most diverse, intriguing, beautiful, colourful, charming, bewildering and exciting country on earth! Travel in India can be challenging. We aim to make it as comfortable and seamless as possible. Certainly, our hotels are 4.5 to 5 star and mostly wonderful!

The **India Tour** includes the capital **Dehli** with '**Lutyens India**', the Mughal **Humayun Mausoleum**, **Old Delhi bazaars** and **Ahmedabad** where we visit **Mahatma Gandhi's Ashram**, and are welcomed by leading landscape architect **Aniket Bhagwat** brilliant principal of *Landscape India*.

Then to **Jaipur** – capital of colourful **Rajasthan** with its forts and palaces, **Agra** – former capital of the Mughal Empire and home to the mighty **Red Fort**, remnants of Emperor Babur's earliest Mughal **Ram Bagh** garden and the mausoleum garden **Taj Mahal** which Aniket says should be seen by moonlight though early morning sunlight brings out the soft ineffable hues of this incomparable jewel of the Mughal Shah Jahan – an exquisite memorial to his beloved Mumtaz Mahal.

From Agra, to **Khajuraho**, to experience the world's finest external stone temple sculptures (the 'naughty temples'). Then on to **Varanasi** – the peak of all religious sites in the Hindu world. We are on the Ganges as dawn breaks, and glimpse something of the soul of India and despite thousands of pilgrims, we aim to make this a comfortable visit. The dancing, chants and music can be pure joy.

The **Sri Lanka Tour** introduces 2,500 years of continuous written history. It was occupied by the Portuguese in the 16th century, the Dutch in the 17th, a British colony in 1815 and saw independence in 1948. With its rich history, we visit ancient cities, sculptures, temples, jungles, an elephant and other wildlife reserves, a tea plantation and much more.

We explore the work of Geoffrey Bawa (1919–2003), the wonderful Sri Lankan architect and garden designer, and principal force behind 'tropical modernism'. We visit a number of his buildings and gardens including his own superb country retreat, *Lunaganga*.

With the defeat of the Tamil Tigers in 2009, Sri Lanka is now peaceful and tourists are discovering rich and diverse landscapes, history and culture. Weather is tropical but greatly modified in regions at altitude.

Our tours aim to provide a cultural introduction to India and Sri Lanka. We provide varied themes on gardens and design but also, a wide range of artistic delights which have evolved over millennia. Above all, we meet the most delightful and friendly people, often at their homes, who are a source of charm and joy and who will linger in hearts and minds, long after our tour becomes a distant memory.

*Warwick and Sue Forge*



## LEADERS, DESIGNERS AND GUIDES

Tour leader **Warwick Forge** LL.B., M.B.A. fell in love with India aged about 12 reading Rudyard Kipling and this led to his three months visit to India and Kashmir in 1966 from whence he drove overland to Scotland. He has been involved with other visits including a study tour of Mughal Gardens with Penelope Hobhouse .

Warwick has been a publisher of gardening books for nearly two decades and in former lives was a lawyer and executive with the National Trust and Trust for Nature.

In 2000 He was awarded the Centenary Medal for his contribution to the environment. This will be his sixth journey to India and his second as Tour Leader.



Sue and Warwick partying in Sicily (AGHS Tour)

Co-tour leader **Susanne Forge** Dip. Bus. (Accounting) company director, accomplished gardener, with multiple managerial skills evident on tour – has a love of the decorative arts which helps with gallery and shopping expeditions. Sue and Warwick have pioneered garden themed tours to five countries in South America, to India and Provence. Since 2002, they convened the *Australian Landscape Conferences* biennially in Melbourne which attract leading garden designers from around the world.

Their India tours have their genesis in the 2013 *Australian Landscape Conference* when **Aniket Bhagwat** provided two brilliant presentations on the gardens and landscapes of India. Professor Jim Sinatra pronounced them the finest presentations he had ever heard.

These two tours follow Aniket's recommendations closely and he will provide a wonderful introduction to modern architecture and gardens of India when we visit him in Ahmedabad. Aniket is principal of the leading firm *Landscape India*.



Aniket Bhagwat

In Delhi we will take a tour with **Pradip Krishen**, leading authority on the trees of India who is actively involved with rehabilitating native landscapes.

We also plan to meet with other experts who will greatly enhance our understanding and enjoyment.

With advice from **Aniket Bhagwat** and other experts, we have developed these tours in conjunction with our specialist In-Ground agents and leading guide **Vineet Kumar Sharma** who is reserved for our tours. Vineet is an amazing guide and a wonderful person who goes to endless trouble to make our tours utterly memorable!



Vineet Kumar Sharma

# THE ITINERARIES

## 1. INDIA TOUR, 8 FEBRUARY – 24 FEBRUARY, 2020

*... a wonderful tour with a wide diversity of cultural activities and fascinating collection of public and private gardens. Many of the hotels were really lovely with excellent facilities and regional cuisine.*

*... Our members will love this tour and the personal contacts and gardens really make for a very personal and special experience!*

- Lisa Tuck, National Executive Officer, Australian Garden History Society

**Fri 8 Feb.** The Claridges Hotel, Delhi

You are met on arrival at Delhi Airport by a travel representative from our agents Emma Horne Travel and transferred to our lovely hotel (deluxe rooms)

**Sat 9 Feb.** The Claridges Hotel.

Following a morning 'meet, greet and introduction', we depart for some sightseeing of Old & New Delhi including a drive around '**Lutyen's Delhi**' and **India Gate**, and a trip around the narrow lanes and streets of Old Delhi, to be explored by bicycle rickshaw.

**Lutyens' Delhi** is an area named after British architect Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944), who was responsible for much architectural design and building when India was part of the British Empire in the 1920s - 1930s. The area includes the **Lutyens Bungalow Zone**. Construction followed after 1911 when the British capital moved to Delhi from Calcutta.

This central area still consists of many large tree avenues (many species) and bungalows and the enormous Presidential Palace, parliament buildings and India Gate. As a largely protected area it is one of the few parts of Delhi that has not suffered too much change in the past 100 years. Most of this area can be happily observed through driving along its broad avenues. Many of the 'bungalows' are now embassies or belong to diplomats.

We travel to the former Viceroy's Residence and now **Presidential Palace** (1913-30) (Rashtrapati Bhavan), designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens on a vast scale with a 340 rooms and 150 hectares of landscaped gardens. The design is 'Mughal Revival' on a huge scale and is much loved for its well tended gardens with lush green lawns, and a wide range of garden plants including a major rose collection.

**Sun 10 Feb** The Claridges Hotel.

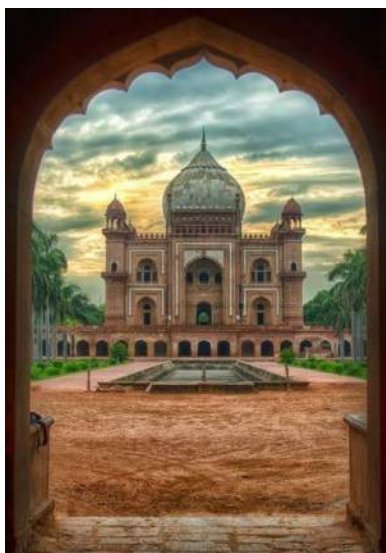
We plan a day trip to visit some very fascinating people who 'stayed on' after independence was granted in 1947. Annie Wright has a horse stud while the Howards have a lovely home and garden where we will have lunch.

**Mon 11 Feb** The Claridges Hotel.

It is refreshing to explore the nearby **Lodhi Gardens** - this time with **Pradip Krishen**, author of a splendid book on the Trees of Delhi. From there we can visit the **Sanskriti Kendra Museums and garden in South Delhi** and also visit the massive **Humayun Mausoleum** which is next door to the **Sunder Nursery**.



Ready for lunch at *Tikli Bottom*



**Tue 12 Feb. House of MG hotel– grand deluxe room**

Morning is available for more sightseeing and we then fly to Ahmedabad and met on arrival and transfer to our hotel – one of India’s most eccentric and fascinating old hotels filled with family mementoes. Some will enjoy a charming indoor pool and dinner in the rooftop garden. It is all good news except that we are now in Gujarat state which is an alcohol free zone!

Humayun Mausoleum, New Delhi

**Wed 13 Feb House of MG hotel– grand deluxe room**

We visit the local Sikh Temple and then walk to the nearby historic precincts, the fascinating ‘pols’ of the city, which have been little touched for centuries.

Then to Gandhi’s Ashram For about twelve years, Mahatma Gandhi, lived at the **Gandhi Ashram**, (Sabarmati Ashram) located on the banks of the River Sabarmati. It was from this base that he led the famous rebellious Dandi or ‘Salt Feb’ (Satyagraha) across India in 1930. In recognition of the significant influence of this march on the Indian independence movement, the Indian government established the ashram as a national monument.

There is much to see in Ahmedabad such as the works of Corbusier who was sponsored by Nehru to work in Chandigarh and Ahmedabad. The Times of India voted Ahmedabad ‘*the best city to live in India*’ and in 2010, it was ‘*ranked third in Forbes’s list of fastest growing cities of the decade*’. As Aniket observes, it is a city of much design creativity.



HALF WAY RETREAT, Ahmedabad Courtesy, Aniket Bhagwat

But it is the architecture and gardens of Aniket Bhagwat that will provide a feature of this tour. Details are not available yet but we feel sure they will be outstanding once again. most direct our thoughts now and he has planned visits to three exciting residences – the **Half Way Retreat, the Drum House and the Bridge House**. See [www.landscapeindia.net](http://www.landscapeindia.net)

**Thur 14 February** *House of MG hotel*– grand deluxe room

This morning we take a day trip into the hinterland to a major **artists colony at Baroda**. It contains a remarkable collection of paintings, sculptures and a range of artefacts within spacious grounds. Its benefactor will normally host our visit to this complex which annually enables many gifted artists from around the world to take up residency for creative studies, exhibitions, etc.



Sculptures in a Gallery, Baroda Artists Colony

**Friday 15 February** Samode Palace Hotel, Jaipur

There will be further sightseeing in Ahmedabad prior to our flight to Jaipur at 19.35 arriving 21.00. The Samode Haveli is ‘our favourite hotel in India’ - Warwick and Sue Forge. It is, *an urban oasis in the historic walled city of Jaipur. Samode Haveli is a traditional Indian mansion set in a verdant garden with apartments arranged around a series of intimate courtyards (garden rooms).*

*Built 175 years ago as a residence of the rulers of Samode, it is still occupied by their descendants, who have converted their home into a luxury hotel.*

**Sat-Sun 16 - 17 February**, Jaipur, Rajasthan Deluxe suite, *Samode Haveli*

Jaipur is a place of wild contrasts, bombarding the senses at every turn. Jaipur’s old city, its rich colours deepening and fading according to the light, is lined with long, twinkling bazaars. (It) *..is today among the most tumultuous and polluted places in Rajasthan. ..But its energy and vibrancy, coupled with imposing historical and cultural wealth, are seductive.*

Jaipur is our favourite city in Rajasthan, and with Amber, affords wonderful sightseeing including visits to the *Amber Palace*, the **City Palace**, **Jantar Mantar Observatory** and the **Hawa Mahal** (Palace of Winds). This five storey building has an ingenious network of windows to provide ladies of the royal household with views of daily life and processions. With its colour, architecture, rich culture, textiles and jewellery, Jaipur provides a very varied experience.

The Rajputs were always proud and fierce warriors and a problem for their Mughal masters. Their honour led them to fight without fear often leading to *jauhar (mass suicide)* rather than surrender. This involved the women and children plunging to their deaths in a vast funeral pyre after which, the men rode out to battle and certain death against impossible odds.



The Hawa Mahal, Jaipur

**Mon-Tue, 18 & 19 February, Jaipur-Fatehpur Sikri-Agra. Taj Gateways,** with Taj views from our window.

We depart Jaipur and drive to Agra (approx 4-5 hours), stopping en route at Abhaneri to see the **Chand Baoli** stepwell. It has 3,500 narrow steps with 13 storeys to a depth of about 30m making it one of the deepest and largest stepwells in India and one of Rajasthan's oldest and most attractive landmarks. It was built by King Chanda of the Nikumbha Dynasty between 800 and 900 AD and dedicated to Hashat Mata, Goddess of Joy and Happiness. Rajasthan is very arid, and the stepwells were intended to store as much water as possible. The distinctive feature of stepwells is that people can easily reach the ground water and maintain the well.

At the bottom of the well, the air remains 5-6 degrees cooler and it was used as a community gathering centre during periods of intense heat. One side of the well has a pavilion and resting room for the royals. **Chand Baori** has been used for film locations e.g. *The Fall* and *Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*.

We drive to **Fatehpur Sikri**, which became the capital of the Emperor Akbar's Mughal Empire from 1571-85. It is recorded that Akbar was desperate for a son and he annually visited Sheik Salim a saintly figure who belonged to the Chishti Sufi order. The saint predicted that Akbar would be delivered of three sons and in 1572 a third son was born. Akbar responded by building the new city, **Fatehpur Sikri**, adjacent to Sheik Salim's residence.

**Fatehpur Sikri** was Akbar's principal place of residence and because of his involvement, it became an artistic and intellectual centre. The emperor's interest in spiritual matters also grew and regular, quite extraordinary discussions and debates took place involving Muslims, Hindus, Zoroastrians and Jesuits.

However, the city suffered from water shortages and on his death in 1585, it was abruptly deserted.

The **Palace** and **Jama Masjid** have been well restored by the Archeological Survey of India but sadly, the city itself remains a ghost town.

We plan to arrive at **Mehtab Bagh** in Agra in time to enjoy the romantic sunset view of the **Taj Mahal** at sunset across the Yamuna River —



On Tuesday we rise early to greet the **Taj Mahal** at dawn -

*'With the warmth of the sunrise the garden mists rose high, drifting away in turquois wreaths .. [and there]..shone the Taj, a miracle revealed.*

*The magic lasted but a moment, but in that moment I had seen the vision as its builders saw and planned it long ago.. It is Mumtaz Mahal herself, radiant in her youthful beauty, who still lingers on the banks of the shining Jumna, at early morn, the glowing midday sun, or in the silver moonlight. Or rather.. it is India's noble tribute to the grace of Indian Womanhood— the 'Venus de Milo of the East'.*

*The Taj is the one triumph of Indian art in which Moslem and Hindu, official Anglo-Indian and passing English tourist all join to reverence and admire... nothing is more striking, in a land of great ruins and tawdry modern buildings, than its absolute bloom of perfection:*

— Constance Villiers-Stuart, *Gardens of the Great Mughals*, 1913

After breakfast we visit the magnificent **Agra Fort** which spreads along the right bank of the Yamuna River and which still today continues to dominate the city. We visit the **Itmad-ud-daulah Tomb** and the **Rambagh (Arum Bagh)** Gardens, on the site of the oldest Mughal garden in India created by the first emperor **Babur**. However, the remnants are now believed to belong to a later property created by Nur Jahan. Nevertheless, these garden resorts and funerary monuments date back to the earliest of Mughal char-baghs which once made up a splendid collection on both sides of the Yamuna River.

**Wed 20 February Agra - Khajuraho Lalit Hotel, Khajuraho**

We take a train to Jhansi then drive to Khajuraho through old traditional landscapes of farms and villages.

**Khajuraho** boasts the best external temple carvings in the world. Certainly their unbridled and explicit eroticism – like the Karma Sutra – is rich in ingenuity. They were built by the Rajput Chandela from 950-1050 and survived five centuries of invading Mughals. Why were they built here – in such a remote location? Nobody seems to know however, no doubt their remoteness saved them from wholesale Mughal destruction as idolatrous objects as occurred elsewhere. There are two principal themes – stone figures of voluptuous, swaying *asparus* (heavenly nymphs) and sex with all its possibilities. Don't say you were not warned! If we are lucky, our visit may coincide with the excellent Dance Festival in March or a *son et lumiere* (sound & light show) at the temple complex.

**Thur - Fri 21-22 Feb Varanasi Brijrama Palace Hotel - Nadidhara room**

There may be time to revisit the temples and see them in the early light prior to the short flight to **Varanasi**.

The Brijrama Palace Hotel is a newly restored old landmark of Varanasi which dates back to 1812. In 1915, the Brahmin King of Darbhanga (Bihar) 'Rameshwar Singh Bahadur' acquired the palace and the Ghat came to be known as Darbhanga Ghat. Its historic elevator, installed in 1918, was built to help the Darbhanga king climb to the second floor and was India's first elevator. The architecture and design of the palace were influenced by the erstwhile ruling Maratha dynasty.

If time permits, we may enjoy a gentle stroll or light sightseeing.

On Friday we take a magic, early boat ride on the most sacred of all rivers – the **Ganges**, and enjoy the sunrise! After breakfast we have a day of touring in Varanasi and a visit to the Buddhist site at **Sarnath**, where it is said that Buddha preached his first lessons on Nirvana.

**Sat 23 February, Varanasi – Delhi. The Claridges**

We fly back to Delhi. Those travelling on to Sri Lanka will require an additional night at The Claridges.





## 2. TREASURES OF SRI LANKA 24 FEBRUARY – 3 MARCH 2020



Minneriya National Park

Sri Lanka has 2,500 years of continuous written history and was first occupied by the Portuguese in the 16th century, the Dutch in the 17th century, became a British colony in 1815 and gained independence in 1948. With its rich history, we visit ancient cities, sculptures, temples, jungles, an elephant and other wildlife reserves, a tea plantation and much more.

We explore the work of Geoffrey Bawa (1919–2003), the wonderful Sri Lankan architect and garden designer, and principal force behind ‘tropical modernism’. We visit a number of his buildings and gardens including his own country retreat, *Lunaganga*.

It has been written that, ‘*North of Kandy, the tangled green hills of the central highlands tumble down into the plains of the dry zone, a hot and denuded region covered in thorny scrub and jungle and punctuated by isolated mountainous outcrops that tower dramatically over the surrounding flatlands. Despite the unpromising natural environment, these northern plains – traditionally referred to as Rajarata, or “The King’s Land”, although now more popularly known as the Cultural Triangle – served as the crucible of early Sinhalese civilization, centred on the great cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, whose grandiose monuments still serve as potent reminders of the golden age of Sinhalese civilization.*

*At the spiritual heart of the Triangle lies the great ruined city of **Anuradhapura**, former capital from the third century BC to 993 AD and one of medieval Asia’s great metropolises, dotted with vast monasteries, elaborate palaces, enormous tanks and a trio of monumental dagobas - a Tibetan style of pagoda (chörten) a Sinhalese term for a Buddhist stupa - excelled in scale in the ancient world only by the Egyptian pyramids.*

*The remains of **Polonnaruwa**, the island’s second capital, are more compact but equally absorbing, while few visitors miss the chance to climb the spectacular rock citadel of **Sigiriya**, perhaps Sri Lanka’s single most extraordinary sight. Other leading attractions include the marvellous cave temples of **Dambulla**, a magical treasure box of Buddhist sculpture and painting, and the religious centre of **Mihintale**, scene of the introduction of Buddhism to the island.*

*Major attractions aside, the Cultural Triangle is peppered with other intriguing but relatively little-visited ancient monuments, including the abandoned cities of **Yapahuwa** and **Panduwas Nuwara**; the great Buddha statues of **Aukana** and **Sasseruwa**; the absorbing temples of **Aluvihara** and **Ridi Vihara**; and the haunting forest monasteries of **Arankele** and **Ritigala**. And there is no shortage of natural attractions, either, at the national parks of **Minneriya**, **Kaudulla** and **Wasgomuwa**.*

With the defeat of the Tamil Tigers in 2009, Sri Lanka is now peaceful and tourists are discovering its diverse landscapes, history and culture. Weather is tropical but greatly modified in those regions at altitude.

The NE monsoon runs from Oct to Jan.

**Sun 24 February, Delhi to Colombo. Galle Face Hotel – superior room**

Those travelling from Delhi will be met on arrival and transferred to our hotel. The rest of this day is at leisure with dinner at the Paradise Road Gallery Café – the former offices of Geoffrey Bawa.

**Mon 25 Feb Galle Face Hotel – superior room**

Today we will tour the exciting and beautiful Geoffrey Bawa's Lunaganga Estate with lunch.

For information, visit <http://www.geoffreybawa.com/lunuganga-country-estate/introductionpage>



Looking to the garden, Lunuganga Country Estate. Courtesy Lunaganga Trust

**Tue 26 Feb Colombo to the Cultural Triangle Heritance Kandalama Hotel – Superior Rooms**

We drive to Dambulla (approx. four hours), into the *Colombo Cultural Triangle* or central plains region. With ancient ruined temples, cities, national parks and glistening reservoirs, UNESCO World Heritage sites include the striking rock fortress of Sigiriya, Dambulla's Royal Rock Temple and the crumbling archaeological treasures of Polonnaruwa.

Within this culturally rich area, we visit the Dambulla Caves and stay at the *Heritance Kandalama Hotel* by Geoffrey Bawa. At Sigiriya, the 'Lion Rock' rises sheer above the plains far below.

**Wed 27 Feb The CULTURAL TRIANGLE/SIGIRIYA Heritance Kandalama.**

We leave our hotel for a morning visit to Sigiriya, also known as the '*Lion Rock*'. The spectacular citadel built on a giant rock rises sheer and impregnable out of the plains below. We can climb the 5th century Sigiriya Rock fortress that is a UNESCO world heritage site – though this is an optional excursion as the climb is quite steep and a little intimidating and there are optional activities. Later in the afternoon, drive to Minneriya National Park for a jeep safari. Dominated by the ancient Minneriya Tank, the plains and forests of this park are home to herds of elephants who come to graze and bathe in the tank's waters. Flocks of cormorants and stocks, toque macaque and sambar deer may also be spotted.



Anuradhapura

**Thur 28 Feb** The CULTURAL TRIANGLE/POLONNARUWA CITY *Heritage Kandalama.*

A morning village walk including a bullock cart ride and canoe trip can be arranged, and a small cookery demonstration will be part of this excursion. We spend the rest of day visiting *Polonnaruwa* city - the second most ancient of Sri Lanka's kingdoms - Polonnaruwa was first declared the capital city by King Vijayabahu I, who defeated the Chola invaders in 1070 AD to reunite the country once more under a local leader. Today the archaeological park contains many well-preserved ruins within a compact area.

We may start with a visit to the *Polonnaruwa Museum* where we can learn about the site in more detail, before heading out to *Gal Viharaya*, a Buddhist shrine where four statues of Lord Buddha are carved out of the rock. Other sites include *Nissanka Latha Mandapaya* which boasts well-preserved stone columns, the impressive *Lankathilaka Temple* and the ruined stone walls of the *Royal Palace*. As Polonnaruwa covers quite a distance we may travel around the area in local tuk tuks!

**Fri 1 March Kandy** *Earls Regency - deluxe room*

After breakfast depart hotel and drive to Kandy (approx. 3 hours) and en-route visit a Spice garden to see the different spices being grown. We spend the afternoon sightseeing in Kandy including a visit to the Temple of the tooth (Dalada Maligawa).

**Sat 2 March Kandy** *Earls Regency - deluxe room*

We have time for further exploration in Kandy. This will include a visit to the famed Peradeniya Botanical gardens which hosts over 4000 species of plants on 147 acres, including a major orchid collection, spices, medicinal plants, palm trees and National Herbarium.

A private Cultural Dance performance for the group will be arranged.

**Sun 3 March Kandy** *local hotel, Negombo*

We drive to Colombo and either depart on an evening flight or stay overnight near the airport at the coastal town of Negombo.



Peacock, Yala N.P.

# HOTELS

In selecting hotels we strive to provide excellent comfort, amenities, location, restaurants and service. Some are truly wonderful and they are all four stars or more. Rankings listed are provided by Tripadvisor. Most of the food is Indian/Sri Lankan, however it is rarely really hot, and there is far more variation and subtlety than in Australia. We do not have personal experience concerning the hotels of Sri Lanka however, we understand they are of a similar standard. Most rooms are superior and not standard but further upgrades are available and sometimes standard rooms can be provided which will provide a saving.

## DELHI

**The Claridges Hotel**- [www.claridges.com](http://www.claridges.com) 5 star – a friendly, boutique hotel, superb central location – attractive garden, swimming pool, choice of restaurants and close to the lovely *Lhodi Gardens*.

## AHMEDABAD

**House of MG** – [www.houseofmg.com](http://www.houseofmg.com) – Aniket’s recommendation, centrally located. Originally the home of a wealthy textile magnet it is steeped in family history, exotic decoration and culture. Excellent roof top restaurant serves traditional Gujarat *thalis* and the indoor pool is lovely to cool off! They have recently opened a very interesting and well curated textile museum in house. A crowd favourite!  
4.5 Stars and No. 1 out of 151 hotels in Ahmedabad!

## JAIPUR

**Samode Haveli, Jaipur** – [www.samode.com](http://www.samode.com) 4.5 Stars – This fabulous palace is quite unique in the Old City now operating as a hotel. It is our favourite hotel in India with good facilities including a large, beautiful pool and spa. It is, *..an oasis within the walled city of Jaipur and is a traditional Indian mansion set in a garden and intimate courtyards. Built 175 years ago, for the rulers of Samode, it is still occupied by their descendants, who have converted their home into a luxury hotel.*



Samode Haveli, Jaipur

## AGRA ([www.tajhotels.com](http://www.tajhotels.com))

**The Taj Gateways hotel** is centrally located – and our rooms provide a distant view of the Taj Mahal. 4 stars. Upgraded rooms available on request.

## KHAJURAHO

**Lalit Hotel** – deluxe temple view, 4 and a half stars. #2 of 22 Hotels in Khajuraho. Forested location with mostly excellent reviews. After a long hot drive, this hotel with its lovely staff, proved a lovely oasis with its very fine pool. The *son et Lumiere* with attendants, musicians and entertainers was impressive and great fun as we dined by candlelight in the extensive gardens.

## VARANASSI

### ***Brijrama Palace Hotel - Nadidhara room***

The Brijrama Palace Hotel is a newly restored old landmark of Varanasi which dates back to 1812. It is brilliantly located on the ghats of the Ganges and has just recently been re-opened to the public.



The Newly restored *Brijrama Palace Hotel*



Will you join us for a G and T in the gardens at the Claridges?

# GENERAL TOUR INFORMATION

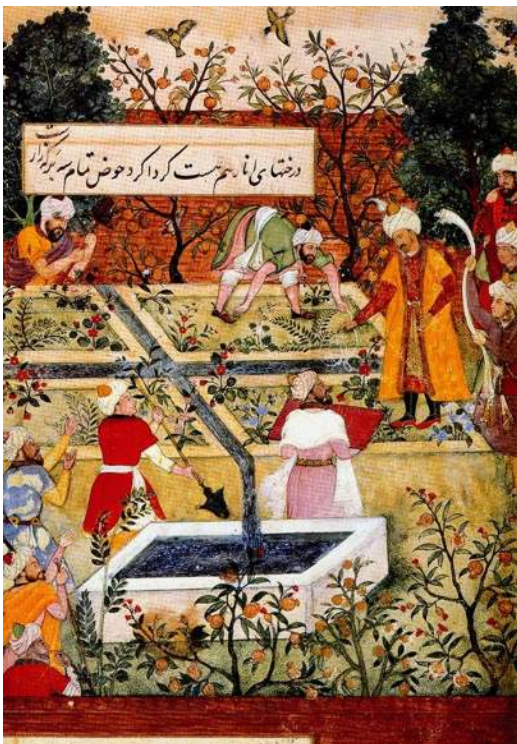
## TOUR GROUP SIZE

We are planning for about 16 travellers with a maximum of twenty. A local multilingual guide and our two tour leaders generally accompany the group at all times.

Keep in mind the option to depart from the tour group for a break, and many evenings are completely free.

## TRAVELLER PROFILES

We generally have a small number with professional interests in gardens, the arts and design; many with a general love of gardens and nature; and many who merely seek a general cultural tour. They are usually, but not always, middle aged and curious about a range of cultural matters and enjoy most of the things we do – including good cuisine, hospitality and the chance to meet people from varied backgrounds. About half are couples and half singles.



Emperor Babur supervising construction of an early Mughal garden of traditional design. This extraordinary leader established Mughal India and encouraged the arts and religious and cultural tolerance.

## PHYSICAL CHALLENGES

This is not a strenuous tour however, people will be expected to travel across various outdoor surfaces, stairs, standing time, etc. February into March is the coolest and best time for touring and gardens in India. Some of the gardens are very large but there are no requirements to

cover all the terrain. Anyone in reasonable health will not experience difficulties and travellers in their eighties can be quite at ease. However, the group must move at the speed of the slowest, and time spent at locations may be reduced if some people are not able to keep up with reasonable speeds.

Applicants must inform ALC Garden Tours (ALCGT) of any medical conditions, which may be relevant to their travel experience.

ALCGT requires that Tour Leaders reserve the right to take steps to modify traveller movements where they feel it is a potential health risk or where travel experiences of others are unduly impaired.

## PROPERTIES, PRIVACY AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Various properties are privately owned and their location and other details must be strictly respected by everyone. The general rule is that no photographs of interiors are permitted. Subject to permission of garden owners, garden photographs for private use may be taken. However, such photographs may not be published without written consent of the owner.

## SECURITY

Every effort is made to ensure safe and secure travel at all times. We should be thoughtful and aware, and in most public areas, not display jewellery, expensive cameras, etc. We should also check, prior to walking out at night.

Secure taxi travel is normally easy to arrange (from hotel or restaurant) and is inexpensive.

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DEFAT) recommends that, *for India overall, exercise a high degree of caution.*

The UK High Commission website says, *There has been an overall decline in violence in recent years and an increase in the numbers of Indian and western tourists. There have been no recent reported attacks on visitors in the cities of Srinagar or Jammu.* (15-10-2015).

## AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY: DISCLAIMER

Condition of Travel: The Australian Garden History Society acts only in the capacity of agent for suppliers of services and shall not in any circumstances be held liable for omissions, defaults, failures or acts on the part of suppliers or transportation companies.

All travelers are strongly encouraged to join the Australian Garden History Society.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is essential to have your own travel insurance to protect your position and it is a **condition of travel** that you take out comprehensive cover for Medical (including repatriation), lost luggage, tour cancellations and any other potential losses. This helps ensure that any problems can be rapidly resolved.



Ganga Aarti, Benares

## BACKGROUND READING

Extensive information will be provided for travellers in due course including a Reading Guide and background reading materials.

## WEATHER

For our India Tour, gardens are at their best normally from February to mid-March. In late March temperatures rise to the thirties but will be cool in the evenings.

Since Sri Lanka is a tropical country, it may rain anytime in different parts of the country. However, the two major rainy seasons are **North-East monsoon** (October to January) predominantly affecting the east coast and **South-West monsoon** (May to July) which predominantly affects the west & south coast.

The climate of Sri Lanka changes dramatically from central highlands to the coastal belt. For example Nuwara Eliya, in the hills of Central Sri Lanka, has a temperature around 5-20°C throughout the year, whereas Hambanthota, in the dry zone, has a temperature consistently around 30-35°C.

## MEALS

Both tours include daily breakfasts plus a substantial meal daily on average. Wine is not normally included since it is mostly imported, expensive and can be indifferent. However, beer, soft drink and bottled water are provided. Quality beers are popular and refreshing in India.

## TYPE OF TOURING.

- Moderate coach travel between cities and for day tours
- Minivans may be used in 1-2 locations as required.
- Various internal flights as listed.



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## VISAS, VACCINATIONS AND HEALTH

Passports must have at least 6 months validity from the date of return to Australia. Please provide a clear copy of your identity page as soon as possible.

At time of writing, Australians require a valid visa for India and Sri Lanka and details will be provided in due course.

For further information visit: [www.visalink.com.au](http://www.visalink.com.au)

We will also provide information concerning potential health issues, precautions, etc. We strongly recommend you see your physician or travel health clinic some eight weeks before departure.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information will be provided well before departure concerning itinerary details, visa requirements, currency issues, arrival and departure taxes, electrical appliances, health, photography, clothing, what to pack, entrance taxes, food, etc. And see:

[www.smarttraveller.gov.au](http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au)



Shah Jahan and his beloved Mumtaz. Garden settings were used for public meetings, political and business sessions, for domestic life and for the women's quarters (the Zenana) which would include the Emperor's wives and concubines.

The Zenana was kept very separate from all other sectors of the encampment. The Mughals retained their nomadic traditions and travelled a great deal and thus the need for extensive gardens in which to camp with requisite staff and equipment.

# TOUR BOOKINGS – TERMS AND CONDITIONS

## 1. Legal

'ALC Garden Tours' (ALCGT) is a registered business name owned by Bloomings Books Pty Ltd, a company owned by Warwick and Sue Forge. We work closely with Specialist In-Ground agents and with Journeymasters for our flights.

## 2. International Flights to and from India

Flight schedules (recommended by Journeymasters) are available and we suggest you discuss arrangements with them. They can often obtain fare savings and assist with coordination and advice on routes, prices and conditions. They enable frequent flyer points, and our internal flights must be booked via them anyway. **Sub-continent flights have potential pitfalls and some carriers are unreliable, and have suspect safety records.**

Coordinated flights help avoid errors and in challenging environments it is a huge advantage to have a single agent coordinating all our flights. We aim for comfortable, seamless and cost effective experiences.

You may consider arriving early for relaxation, shopping and orientation which can greatly assist in your enjoyment of the tours. Hotel bookings for extra days are available with our special rates.

You may also choose to stay on at the end of your tour and visit other destinations as you please.

## 3. Extension Tours

Terms and conditions may be arranged separately.

## 4. Tour Inclusions

- Accommodation in a double or twin-share room or single supplement in outstanding 4 to 5 star hotels.
- All flights, train, coach, etc. transport pertaining to the Tour Itinerary are all included.
- Both tours include two substantial meals daily (one of which is breakfast) on average.
- Generally, water, beer and soft drink are included with our meals. Special drinks such as wine can be ordered and paid for as desired. Details will be confirmed.
- Air-conditioned coaches are supplied with bottled water.
- Airport-hotel transfers
- All gratuities and tips, hotel portorage, etc. except for the official Tour Guide.
- Lectures and site presentations
- Entrance fees to all scheduled museums, galleries and properties, etc.

## 5. Tour Exclusions

- Personal spending money.
- Any excess luggage charges. Luggage allowance is normally 15kg for internal flights however, surplus items can be stored at our Delhi hotel and excess rates are modest.
- Your comprehensive travel insurance.
- Visas, arrival and departure taxes where applicable.
- A tip for the Tour Guide at the end of the tour is expected by long convention (if you are happy with his services).

## 6. Reservations

**Applications are made on the relevant Reservation Forms and sent with accompanying documents to Warwick Forge, by email if scanned, or mailed to: PO Box 198, Toorak, Vic., Australia, 3142**

On approval, you will receive booking confirmation with travel details. Payment details are prescribed below and on the Reservation Forms.

Please provide good copies of scanned documents, use a **black biro** if possible and print in CAPITAL LETTERS. Most mobile phones will provide an adequate image if held securely and in line with the document.

**7. Tour Prices** (in Australian dollars), subject to variations below.

### \* INDIA TOUR 8 – 24 February, 2020 (17 days)

For shared room (twin or double) \$8,850

Includes all coach transport and flights:  
Delhi-Ahmedabad; Ahmedabad-Delhi;  
Agra-Khajuraho; Khajuraho-Varanasi;  
Varanasi-Delhi.

\* **Single Supplement** \$2,840

### \* SRI LANKA TOUR (Optional extension)

24 Feb – 3 March (7 days) \$3,990

For shared room (twin or double)

Includes all internal transport.

\* **Single supplement** \$970

**TOTAL**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

## 8. Tour Payments

(a) \$1,000 deposit at the time of booking per person per tour. This is refunded if the tour is cancelled.

(b) Second payment by 1 May, 2019, for 25% of your tour costs to confirm your hotels, flights, etc.

(c) The balance is invoiced 1 September, 2019, payable on 1 October, 2019. We **strongly** recommend prompt payment since late payments can lead to room or flight cancellations. Indian hotels can be very strict with booking requirements.

## 9. Payments

1. Bank transfer: – ALC Garden Tours

BSB 013 332 ACC 1980 64981, OR

2. Cheque to 'ALC Garden Tours',

PO Box 198, Toorak, Vic., Australia, 3142

Credit card facilities are not available.

comprehensive insurance in order to cover all potential

## 10. Booking Conditions

When we receive your Reservation form(s) and confirm a place(s) for you, a contract then exists in accordance with the documents sent to you. If a place is not available we will return your deposit in full.

## 11. Tour Cost Variations

(a) Single travellers may share a twin room and we can sometimes assist regarding a potential share arrangement.

(b) Tour prices are based on ground costs, fuel prices, airfares, airport charges, ground operator fees, significant currency exchange movements and other assumptions. Exchange rates adopted on 15/1/19 via [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) were for India AUD1.00 = 50.77 INR, and for Sri Lanka, USD1.00 = AUD1.387. We note that the AUD normally appreciates against the INR as with most developing countries. At all times, we seek to fix prices and resist increases and this has never been necessary in the past. However, we reserve the right to do so in a case where significant cost increases occur outside our control.

(b) The India Tour is based upon 14 paying travellers and the Sri Lanka Tour upon 12. Should a group be smaller, group price arrangements may suffer and ALC Garden Tours (ALCGT) may contact participants to discuss whether a supplement should be payable or the tour cancelled.

6. For additional tour arrangements, variations, hotel bookings and luggage drop-offs, etc., an administrative fee of \$50 may be payable.

## 12. Cancellations

Subject to the above, your deposit(s) will be refunded less \$200 service fee per person if you cancel prior to 1 May, 2019, but are not refundable thereafter.

Cancellation charges apply after the following dates:

<u>Cancellation fee</u>	<u>Date</u>
From 1 May 2019	Deposit not recoverable
10% of your tour payments	120 days plus prior to travel
50% of your tour payments	120 - 60 days prior to travel
75% of your tour payments	60 - 30 days prior to travel
100% of your tour payments	30 days prior to travel

'Tour payments' refers to the total tour costs charged. Cancellations must be in writing and the date of cancellation is the date of receipt.

## 13. Liability for Loss or Damage

Express condition of travel that:-

1. ALC Garden Tours (ALCGT) in their capacity and as agent for tour operators, land agents, airlines, hotels, coach companies, museums etc., will not be liable for any claim (provided it acts *bona fide*), for loss due to accident, delay, personal injury, inadequate or failed accommodation, travel arrangements, baggage or other losses, illness, industrial or civil unrest, terrorist attack, military or political disturbances, hijacking, kidnapping, thefts, assaults, volcanoes or other geological event, pain and suffering, loss of future earnings or any other injury to person or property.
2. It is a condition of travel that you take out adequate

travel risks and this **must include repatriation plus accompanying medical staff if required**. A copy of the insurance certificate must be provided to ALCGT.

3. You must provide full disclosure of any relevant medical conditions as requested on the Reservation Form.

4. The Tour Leader has full discretion to request a participant to refrain or modify activities if in his/her opinion, such activities are disruptive or may cause discomfort to others.

The Tour Leader has full discretion to cancel any person's further involvement in the tour where he/she deems such action warranted.

ALCGT's responsibility for that person will then cease immediately and will not be responsible for any claimed loss or damage. Where a Tour Leader is unavailable through illness or other cause, he/she may appoint a Deputy with complete power to act as the Tour Leader.

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*Warwick and Sue Forge*

*23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2019*

*E&OE (Errors and omissions excepted)*

**FOR ALL TOUR ENQUIRIES:**

Warwick Forge

Director

ALC Garden Tours

PO Box 198, Toorak Vic 3142

e: [warwick@bloomings.com.au](mailto:warwick@bloomings.com.au) m: 043 818 2801

For any tour updates and further information, visit – [www.alcgardentours.com](http://www.alcgardentours.com)

**FOR ALL FLIGHT ENQUIRIES:**

Sarah Miller

The Journeymasters

74 Paddington Street

Paddington NSW, Australia, 2021

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f: +61 2 9360 4222 [www.journeymasters.com.au](http://www.journeymasters.com.au)



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