

# Festival of Faith

## Puri Rath Yatra Tour

Join millions of pilgrims to participate in an elaborate procession infused with ritual, devotion and fervour!

**15 - 20 July 2015**

On the **East Coast of India** in an ordinarily sleepy temple town; **Puri** springs to life during the annual **festival of the Gods**. Patron deities are anointed and jewelled before settling into their **massive wood carved chariots**.

**Thousands of devotees** from all over India vie for the privilege of hand pulling these outstanding structures. The **elaborate rituals and palpable faith is an awe-inspiring spectacle**. This year's festivities are **especially auspicious** and preparations are already underway to receive an expected **3 million pilgrims**.

Don't miss this **opportunity of a lifetime** - book today!!

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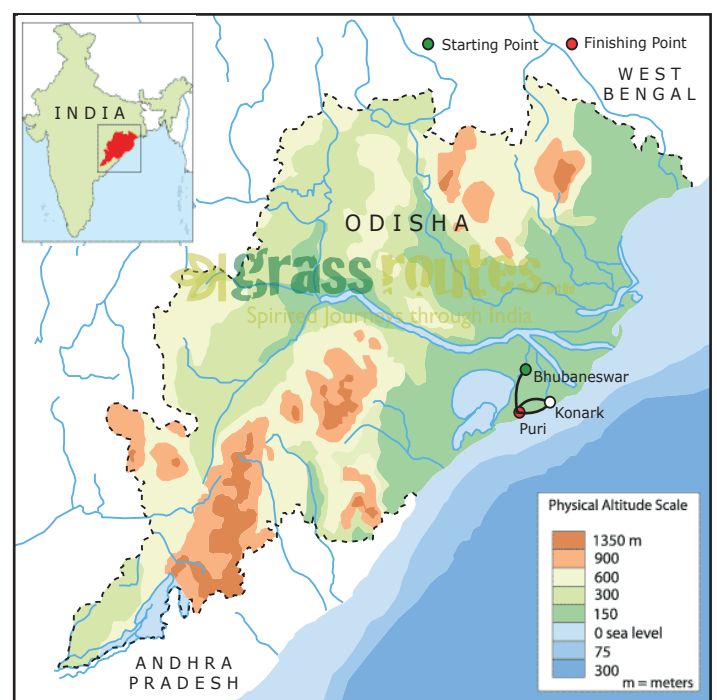
Puri's annual **Chariot Festival (Rath Yatra)** is one of India's most vibrant festivals drawing devotees far and wide. The Hindu calendar deems **2015 as especially auspicious**. This Rath Yatra marks a **special event** that occurs only every 12 to 19 years; patron deities (Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra) are given new physical form. Carved from the Margossa tree the **new handcrafted idols** will be consecrated amid much fanfare.

The entire festivities are **richly steeped in symbolism and carries forth ancient rituals** that have remained much unchanged for centuries. In today's fast paced world, this is a remarkable testament to the devotion of the faithful.

**Witness the earnest preparations build up to a crescendo of joy** as patron deities are transferred from their temple adobe to massive hand crafted chariots. Made from scratch for the occasion each year, these beautifully ornamented chariots are reference to the ancient Hindu epic, the Bhagavad Gita.

Standing some 45 feet tall the chariots serve as beacons in the sea of pilgrims. Each deity is seated in their respective vehicle and physically hauled by thousands of devotees through the teeming streets. The **euphoric atmosphere** verges on chaos at times and the cacophony of colour and crowds is as overwhelming as it is **enthralling**.

An assault to the senses, **all in good Faith!**



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## Day to Day Program

## 15 – 20 July 2015

### Day 1 Bhubaneswar to Puri 15 July 2015

Bhubaneswar, the lively capital of Odisha since the ancient 'Kalinga' empire boasts settlement stretching back 2000 years. On a guided walk through the old quarter you'll discover ancient temples and their architectural evolution as they developed through the ages. Skirt the edge of a holy water tank and take in the street life that pervades this medieval neighbourhood.

After lunch in the capital, transfer to Puri via Heritage Craft Village Raghurajpur. Home to a lineage of artisans that have shaped their respective crafts since the 5th C, this is a unique village dedicated to the Arts. See painters, scribes and folk artists at work. We'll meet renowned artists from various disciplines and offer an introduction to their exceptional skills.

**Overnight in Puri.**

### Day 2 Puri 16 July 2015

Puri is one of India's most sacred pilgrimage sites (one the Charm Dham's as defined by Shankaracharya, a revered Hindu saint). This morning we follow an ancient pilgrim route by cycle rickshaw to visit significant monasteries and sites around town. We explore medieval by-lanes, drop into a palm-leaf library and behold the awesome Jagannath Temple; the epicenter of the city.

Optional stroll toward the southern beachfront for sunset and delight in the local market that sets up camp for the evening. For many pilgrims this is where they first witness the sea and it's a wonderful place to sit back with a cup of tea and enjoy the spectacle.

**Overnight in Puri.**

### Day 3 Puri 17 July 2015

Wake up to a morning yoga session followed by a leisurely walk along the beach. In the afternoon hit the city streets again to witness the final preparations as completed chariots are positioned in front of the temple and draped in canopies of bright appliqué. Enjoy a private folk dance performance by local Gotipua troupe.

**Overnight in Puri.**

### Day 4 Puri 18 July 2015

Today we witness the MAIN EVENT as swarms of people congregate on the Grand Rd to witness their patron gods in their brand new form. We'll jostle among the crowds to feel the spirit of the devotees but we'll also secure a rooftop position wherein we can safely observe the celebrations.

**Overnight in Puri.**

### Day 5 Puri 19 July 2015

After the excitement of yesterday, we take a breather and venture into a private garden to enjoy a moment under a canopy of trees. Optional dip in the river before a picnic lunch. We then proceed to Konark and behold the UNESCO World Heritage Sun Temple. Conceived as a giant solar chariot, this is one of India's most sublime monuments. Watch the last of the sun's rays as it dips into the Bay of Bengal.

**Overnight in Puri.**

### Day 6 Depart 20 July 2015

You are free to depart at any time today (your Hotel check out is 8am). Ask us about further day excursions or extensions if interested.

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## INCLUSIONS

### Accommodation (5 Nights in Puri):

Grass Routes offers the choice of a locally run Bed and Breakfast or 3 star Beachfront Hotel. Let us know your preference so that we can revert with the price accordingly. Please note Puri is extremely busy during the Rath Yatra and your choice is subject to availability. Get in quick to avoid disappointment!

### Activities:

Bhubaneswar Heritage Walk  
Heritage Craft Village (Raghurajpur) Visit  
Puri Old City Tour by Cycle Rickshaw  
Private Yoga session & Beach Walk  
Pre-Festival City Visit  
Private Gotipua Performance  
Priority Rath Yatra rooftop seating  
Garden Picnic Lunch and  
UNESCO World Heritage Sun Temple (Konark)

### Included Meals:

All breakfasts, 2 Lunches. Please allow approx. US\$10 per day for additional meals.

### Transport:

Private Transfers from Bhubaneswar to Puri and during the day excursion to Konark.  
Cycle Rickshaws in Puri.

### Support:

You will be fully supported by passionate Local Guides throughout.

### Arrival:

This tour begins in the state capital of Bhubaneswar. We can arrange arrival transfers from the domestic airport or Railway Station on request. We recommend you arrive at least a day in advance as we begin our Bhubaneswar Heritage Walk on Day 1 at 8:30AM. We are happy to arrange pre-tour accommodation to suit your requirements.

### Departure:

The tour finishes in Puri; a short 2 hour drive from Bhubaneswar. Should you wish to extend your journey we can offer a range of enticing options. We can also arrange departure transfers for your onward journey.

### Booking:

Limited spaces available so get in quick! For more details and prices email us on [info@grassroutesjourneys.com](mailto:info@grassroutesjourneys.com)  
Call us on +91 9437029698,  
9437022663 or  
Skype on [grassroutesjourneys](https://www.skype.com/name/grassroutesjourneys).