



A chariot plying the pilgrim packed streets

## festival of faith

8 Days • Kolkata – Puri • €790\*

India is a country of vastly differing scenery and people. Exemplified as much in the mountains, plains, rivers, forests and coastline, as in the countries rich cultural diversity. Orissa is one of India's remotest regions and also one of its most distinctive.

On the west Orissa is bounded by the thickly forested hills of the Eastern Ghats while the east boasts a 500km coastline facing the Bay of Bengal. The hinterland a lush stretch of green paddy fields dotted with ancient Buddhist ruins and tranquil hamlets where traditional crafts flourish.

The traditional temple town of Puri (one of four most sacred spots in India) hosts Orissa's biggest and India's grandest **festival of faith**. The elaborate procession attracts thousands of fervent pilgrims, all vying for a chance to get close to their Gods. Immense chariots carrying the patron Gods: Lord Jagannath, brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra, are physically hauled through the teeming streets.

### profile

Some walking, camping, bouncing along country roads and rubbing shoulders with thousands of pilgrims at the **festival of faith**. Conditions are likely to be warm and on the main festival day crowded. As always in India, those with patience and a healthy spirit of adventure are amply rewarded.

The euphoric atmosphere verges on chaos at times, but the cacophony of colour and crowds is as overwhelming as it is enthralling!

### fast facts

**Support:** Passionate Local Leader throughout

**Accommodation:** Simple hotel/guesthouse (5nts), tent camping (1nt), overnight sleeper train (1nt)

**Activities:** Kolkata Sightseeing, Puri Old City by Cycle Rickshaw, UNESCO World Heritage Konark Sun Temple Entry, Heritage Painting Village (Raghurajpur) Visit, Rath Yatra Viewing Post, Chilika Lake Camping, Temple Dancer (Gotipua) Village Visit.

**Transport:** Tram, private transport, overnight sleeper train, cycle rickshaws, slow boat, local public bus.

**Meals:** 1 Dinner, 1 Breakfast, 1 Lunch. Please allow approx. €10 per day for additional meals.

**Arrival/Departure:** Kolkata has an International Airport and Puri is only a 2 hour drive to the Domestic Airport at Bhubaneswar. Both Kolkata and Puri are well connected to the rest of India by domestic airlines and the Indian Railway network.

**Tipping:** An essential way of life in India, we will provide you appropriate guidelines.

## itinerary

### Day 1 Kolkata

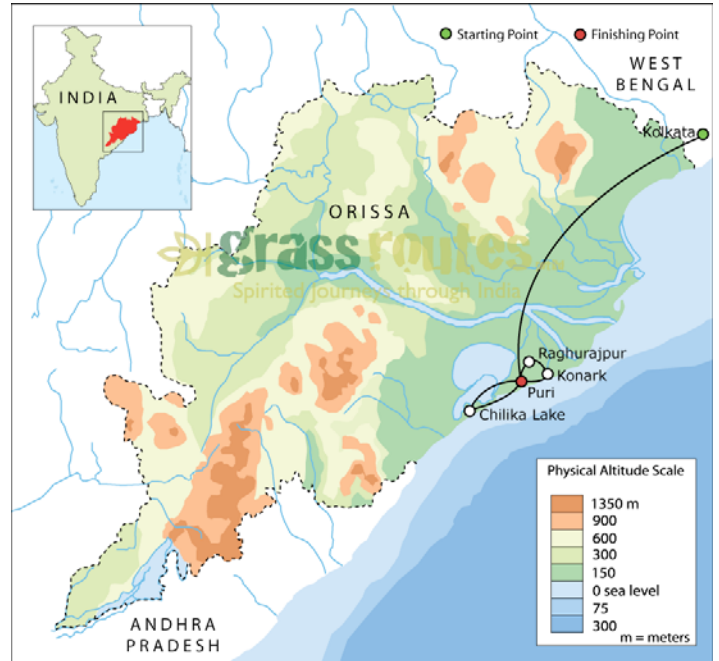
Known as the 'City of Joy', Kolkata is a vibrant cultural centre with a reputation as one of India's most frenetic, exciting and friendly cities. It won't take you long to discover why!

**Group Meeting:** Travellers are requested to arrive on by Day 1 before 18:00 to give you an overview of the exciting things in store and some practical advice on how to make the most of your journey. Please bring your passport and a copy of your insurance policy as we need to verify essential details.

### Day 2 Kolkata

Once the capital of British India, Kolkata is home to India's most impressive colonial vestiges and what better way to experience this than a tram ride through the city! Join the masses thronging the famous Hoogly Bridge and take in the view from the bank of India's most sacred river Ganges. Stroll along the riverbank for a unique insight into different communities; wander through the colourful flower market, keep your eyes peeled for the outdoor gymnasiums used by traditional wrestlers and visit the community of idol makers fashioning deities of patron Goddess Durga.

Kolkata is often considered the 'soul' of India and Bengalis are renowned for their cultural and intellectual affluence. Tune in to the frequent music, film and theatre events, take a look at the numerous art galleries and museums or simply hang out at some of Kolkata famous coffee or pub spots and discover what makes the locals buzz.



### Day 3 Puri

Settling into a slower pace of life we walk through the old city where traditional communities maintain time honoured trades. Mill around the town square, meet the locals and watch as carpenters and painters prepare the huge chariots for the biggest festival of the year.

### Day 4 Puri

Delight in the ancient temple architecture of **UNESCO World Heritage** Sun Temple at Konark. Wander through the heritage village of Raghurajpur where families continue a long lineage of traditions. See how organic materials are used in prescribed techniques to paint vivid scenes.



### Day 5 Puri

Thrive on the tangible fervour of the **festival of faith!** Mingle with the hundreds and thousands of pilgrims. Watch the elaborate rituals of the grand procession from a unique vantage point. Feel the energy brim with euphoria and marvel at the colourful spectacle!

### Day 6 Chilika Lake

Unwind on the tranquil waters of Chilika Lake, Asia's largest estuarine lagoon and **Ramsar Wetland of International Importance**. Bask in the tropical sun and take in the unique ecosystem that combines marine, brackish and fresh water. Spot rare birds from as far a field as Siberia and Iran and keep your eyes peeled for the Irrawaddy dolphin.

Watch the sunset over the Bay of Bengal and camp under the stars.

### Day 7 Puri

Glide through still waters and bounce along country roads on the way back to Puri. Walk through rural villages and enjoy healthy country cuisine. Be enchanted by traditional temple dancers as they practise their unique blend of acrobatics and classical dance (Gotipua).

### Day 8 Depart Puri

You are free to depart at any time of Day 8, or choose to stay on and spend a few extra days relaxing by the beach before heading home!



Decorative detail of the chariots

## practical information

### passports & visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and obtain your own visa in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. Further country specific information is available at [Indian Missions Abroad](#).

### vaccinations & health

Recommended vaccinations are Typhoid, TB, Polio, Tetanus and a vaccination against Hepatitis A. India is a malarial area and you should appropriate precautions. Consult your Doctor or Vaccination centre for up to date information.

### travel insurance

A comprehensive travel insurance policy is compulsory to join this trip. Travellers are required to show possession of such at the Group Meeting. We recommend you consult your travel agent or check out [World Nomads](#).

### additional accomodation

Additional Accommodation before or after the trip is available on request. We associate with premier properties to suit all budgets. You are requested to notify us your requirements at the time of booking.

### airport transfers

Airport Transfers by private air-conditioned vehicles are available on request. Please provide flight arrival details at the time of booking or at least 2 weeks prior to departure.

### extra expenses

Small expenses encountered along the way (excluding meals mentioned earlier in Fast Facts) include camera fees, tipping and shopping.

## practical information

### joining point

#### Hotel Lindsay

8 A & 8 B Lindsay Street  
Kolkata, WEST BENGAL  
Tel: +91 33 2252237 -8

A modest hotel tucked away in the heart of Kolkata. Opposite the thriving New Market, you are in the centre of bustling activity, amidst great cafes and restaurants and surrounded by stately colonial buildings. The hotel is an efficient middle class business hotel with modern facilities.

### finishing point

#### Hotel Gandhara

Chakra Tirtha Rd  
Puri, ORISSA  
Tel: +91 6752 224117, 224623

Simple, spotless and popular hotel in close proximity to tourist amenities. Set in a beautiful garden atmosphere, a friendly home away from home.

### domestic connections

Orissa is well connected to the rest of India by train (consult the world's largest rail network [Indian Railways](#)) and plane. [MakeMyTrip](#) and [ClearTrip](#) are both useful resources for booking online flights or choose from any of the domestic airlines below:

[Air India](#)   [Deccan\\*](#)   [GoAir\\*](#)   [Indian](#)   [Indigo](#)  
[Jet Airways](#)   [JetLite\\*](#)   [Kingfisher\\*](#)   [Paramount](#)   [Spice Jet](#)

\* Regular scheduled services to/from Bhubaneshwar, the capital of Orissa, just 2 hours drive to/from Puri.

### booking options

Book your journey online by going to our website at [www.grassroutesjourneys.com](http://www.grassroutesjourneys.com). Select your journey by clicking the 'Book This Journey' button. You will be directed to our online Booking Request Form. Specify your preferred date to join a group departure or request a private departure on the dates of your choice. Fill up the particulars and make a note of any special requirements. After completing the Booking Request Form you will receive confirmation and invoice by email. On receipt of your deposit your place on the requested journey is reserved.

### payment options

We use the online payment systems of PayPal to ensure your credit card details are secure and trusted. We can also accept cheque and direct deposit payments.

### credo for grass routes travellers

I am grateful for the opportunity to travel and experience the world and affirm my personal responsibility to:

- Journey with an open mind & gentle heart
- Accept with grace and gratitude the diversity I encounter
- Revere and protect the natural environment that sustains all life
- Appreciate all culture I discover
- Respect and thank my hosts for their welcome
- Offer my hand in friendship to everyone I meet



Patron Hindu Deity of Orissa  
'Lord Jagannath'