

TRAVEL WITH FRIENDS IN 2016

Reclining Buddha in the Ajanta caves

India: Land of Many Gods

ELEPHANTA – AJANTA – ELLORA – SANCHI – BODH GAYA – NALANDA



with Jackie Menzies
26 Jan – 12 Feb 2016 (18 days)





India: Land of Many Gods



TOUR LEADER

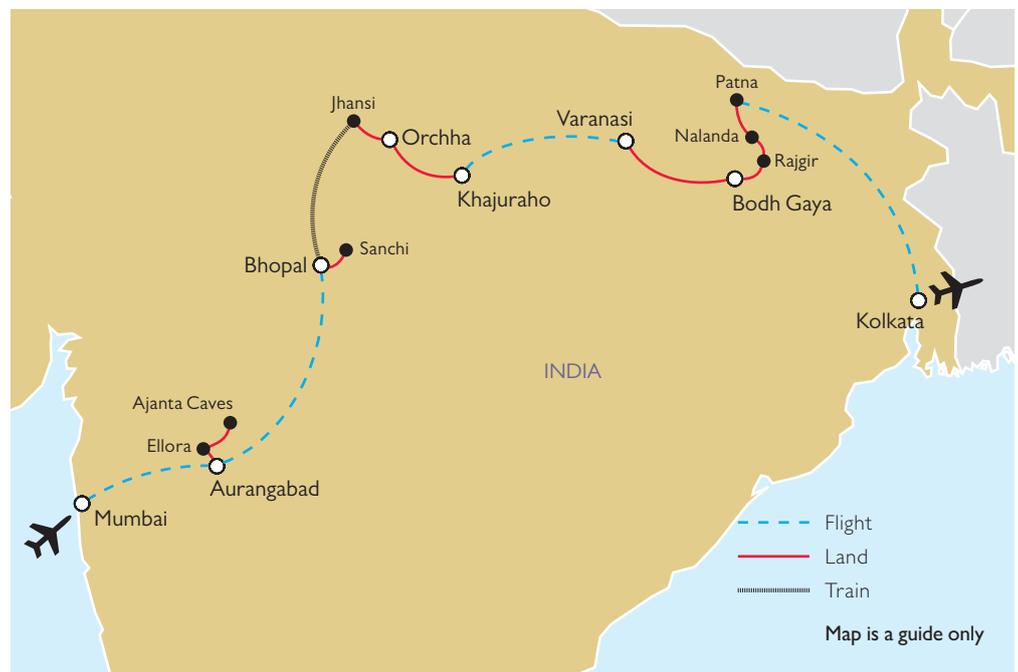
Jackie Menzies OAM is Emeritus Curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of NSW, and has travelled widely through Asia. From 1979 to 2012 (as Head of Asian Art at AGNSW), she curated many exhibitions, and contributed to scholarly catalogues on Asian Art. She is responsible for several significant Asian exhibitions at AGNSW, including 'INDIA: Dancing to the Flute' (1997), 'BUDDHA: Radiant Awakening (2001)' and 'GODDESS: Divine Energy (2006)'. Jackie has written and lectured extensively on Asian art and culture. She was President of the Asian Arts Society from 1980 to 1990, and Founding Director of VisAsia, the Australian Institute of Asian Art and Culture. She has led several tours to different Asian countries, including India, a country she loves.

The faith of over 300 million people, Buddhism encompasses the teachings of Siddhartha Guatama (the Buddha). Travelling through India, China, Korea and Japan immerse yourself in The Buddha Project as you follow the steps of this ancient religion. In this four part series of tours, visit heritage listed Buddhist caves, sacred temples and spiritually significant sites that convey the complex heritage of this belief system.

Begin the project with part one, India: Land of Many Gods, and see a nation that is home to the great religions of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. Visit Bodh Gaya, where the Buddha attained enlightenment; Ajanta, with its exquisite cave paintings; and idyllic Sanchi, filled with ancient monuments. This journey through India has been shaped by sites significant to Buddhism, but major sites of other religions are also included. See Elephanta with its superbly sculpted images; explore the vibrant sacred city of Varanasi; tour the richly embellished Hindu temples of Khajuraho; and delve into the lives and beliefs of India and her people.

At a glance...

- Delve into the lives and beliefs of Mumbai and its people
- Visit the heritage listed Buddhist caves of Ajanta with their famous paintings; and sculptured rock temples of Ellora
- View the Stupa of idyllic Sanchi, and the Bhimbetka Rock shelters of Bhopal
- Tour the richly embellished Hindu temples of Khajuraho
- Explore the vibrant and sacred city of Varanasi
- Follow the steps of the Buddha in Bodh Gaya, Rajgir and Nalanda



Itinerary

Tue 26 Jan

Sydney – Mumbai

Suggested departure from Australia on Singapore Airlines flights to Mumbai. Evening arrival on the same day, transfer (if travelling on suggested flights) and check-in to your hotel.

Mumbai is a seething mass of humanity and unrelenting traffic. Ornate Victorian-Gothic buildings provide a backdrop for noisy street vendors and office wallahs rushing to work. Wide, leafy boulevards are lined with monumental British constructions but not all the grand architecture was courtesy of the Raj – wealthy Jains and Parsis have also left their mark.

Wed 27 Jan

Mumbai

This morning join Jackie Menzies and fellow travellers for a welcome breakfast briefing at the hotel.

Begin the exploration of Mumbai from the Gateway of India, the landmark of Bombay. Visit the Jain marble temples dedicated to the first Jain Tirthankara ('Propagator', of whom there are 24). Continue to Malabar Hill via the Tower of Silence – a round stone construction (on which Parsis place their dead to be eaten by the vultures) – and Hanging Gardens which is built over Bombay's reservoir. Enjoy spectacular views of Chowpatti Beach and the Arabian Sea.

Continue to the Dhobi Ghats, a huge open-air laundry, and to Mani Bhawan (Gandhi Memorial), the house where the Father of the Nation stayed on his early visits to the city. Visit the room in which Gandhi stayed, preserved as it was, with scenes of Gandhi's life in photographs and models.

After lunch at a local restaurant, familiarise yourself with contemporary Indian art and culture as you explore both public and private art galleries in the Kala Ghoda Art district of Mumbai. **B L D**

Thu 28 Jan

Mumbai

After breakfast, proceed to the famous Elephanta caves, a 7th century cave temple complex which has been carved out of rock and is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It has a six metre high, three-headed bust representing Shiva the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. Other sculptures and relief panels overwhelm with their powerful artistry.



Elephanta Caves © Leon Yaakov via flickr.com:photos:106447493@N05

Continue to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya Museum (formerly called, and still often referred to as the Prince of Wales Museum). Its gothic and Moorish architecture is a striking confluence of styles that came to be known as Indo-Saracenic. The museum encompasses art, archaeology, natural history and design, with a significant collection of Indus valley artefacts, some dating back more than 5000 years.

After lunch at a local Parsi restaurant, visit the Alpaiwalla Museum, where the curator is at hand to explain the history of traditional Parsi artefacts. **B L D**

Fri 29 Jan

Mumbai – Aurangabad

Following a talk, spend the morning exploring the heady eclecticism of Mumbai and observing the mixture of Hindu, Muslim, Jew, Christian or Buddhist citizens. The city, its architecture and customs, reflect the diversity of its inhabitants and its vibrant history.

After lunch at a local restaurant, transfer to Mumbai airport for an afternoon flight to Aurangabad. **B L D**

Sat 30 Jan

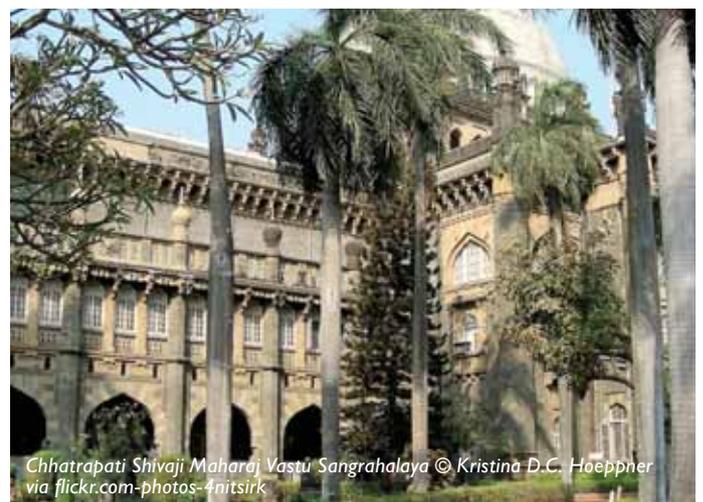
Aurangabad

Today explore the UNESCO World Heritage listed cave temples of Ajanta. The Buddhist caves of Ajanta are one of the most magnificent artistic treasures in all Asia. Here, for a thousand years, Buddhist monks cut spectacular temples, monasteries and prayer halls into the living rock and decorated them with frescos and statues, showing the luxuries and wonders of India during its classical Golden Age. Reflecting India's connection at the time via the Silk Road to China, Tibet, Persia and Rome, the amazingly preserved paintings of Ajanta show a fascinating mix of eastern and western styles. **B L D**

Sun 31 Jan

Aurangabad – Bhopal

After a thousand years, the monks and merchants of Ajanta mysteriously left and moved to Ellora Caves, the destination of this morning's excursion. At Ellora, sculpture and architecture were taken to a truly astounding height with the creation of the unique Kailasa Temple, an eight storey representation of heaven carved in three dimensions out of the face of an entire mountain.



Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya © Kristina D.C. Hoepfner via flickr.com-photos-4nitsirk

One of the wonders of the world, the architecture of Ellora has never been surpassed, and can only be compared in grandeur with Petra in Jordan, or the Pyramids in Giza.

Late afternoon, transfer to Aurangabad airport for the flight to Bhopal (via New Delhi). **B L D**

Mon 1 Feb

Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh State is the little visited heartland of India, where some of the subcontinent's most spectacular artistic treasures are hidden among a traditional rural landscape.

Following a talk, proceed to Sanchi. Here, set among villages and fields lies the great Stupa, its exquisitely carved gateways, and other monuments. The stupas were originally built in the time of the famed King Asoka; Sanchi was one of the greatest centres of Buddhist learning and piety for over 1500 years. See scenes from the life of the Buddha, images from the courtly life of classical India, as well as stories from early Buddhist fable and myth.

Following lunch, drive to the site of Udayagiri, the capital of India during one of its most prosperous and sophisticated eras of civilisation. Visit the royal caves, filled with scenes of Hindu gods and goddesses. **B L D**

Tue 2 Feb

Bhopal – Orchha

Following breakfast, journey to the Bhimbetka Rock shelters, an archaeological site of the Paleolithic era, exhibiting the earliest traces of human life on the Indian subcontinent. Some of the Stone Age rock paintings found among the Bhimbetka rock shelters are approximately 30,000 years old.

Return to Bhopal railway station to board the train for Jhansi (3.5h). On arrival in Jhansi, transfer to the town of Orchha, founded in the 16th century by the Bundela chieftain, Rudra Pratap Singh, who built this new capital on large wooded islands on the River Betwa. Today, remains of the fort and palaces speak eloquently of Orchha's time of glory, and of its splendid legacy of art and culture. **B L D**



Wed 3 Feb

Orchha – Khajuraho

After breakfast, tour the beautiful medieval town of Orchha and visit the multi-tiered Jahangiri Mahal (1606), built by a Rajput king in honour of his Mughal overlord, the Emperor Jahangir. See some of the best preserved Mughal period frescoes, palaces and pleasure pavilions, as well as the great Rama temple and bustling town marketplace, which is still the haunt of wandering holy men, fakirs and meditating Sadhu priests.

After lunch, continue by bus through the craggy and remote hills of Bundelkhand (meaning 'land of blood') to Khajuraho, site of some of the best preserved and most spectacularly decorated Hindu temples left on earth (180km/4h).

When Islamic armies swept through India destroying and plundering the great Hindu and Buddhist temple complexes in their path, they missed the royal centre of Khajuraho because of its isolated location deep in the hills of central India. **B L D**

Thu 4 Feb

Khajuraho

Following a talk, spend the remainder of the day touring the western and eastern temples. Rediscovered by the British in the 19th century, the magnificent sculpted temples of Khajuraho stand testament to the artistic and architectural greatness of pre-Islamic India. They were originally built in the 12th century and covered with sculptures of gods, goddess, angels, celestial maidens and yogis, in an attempt to recreate the Hindu cosmos in stone. They also challenge Western, and contemporary Indian, sexual norms and mores – with elaborate scenes of celestial and earthly love carved over their facades.

After lunch, visit the Khajuraho Archaeological Museum for an exclusive lecture on temple architecture and sculptures inside the museum by a senior scholar. **B L D**

Fri 5 Feb

Khajuraho – Varanasi

The morning is at leisure to either relax or take one last exploration through the old town of Khajuraho.

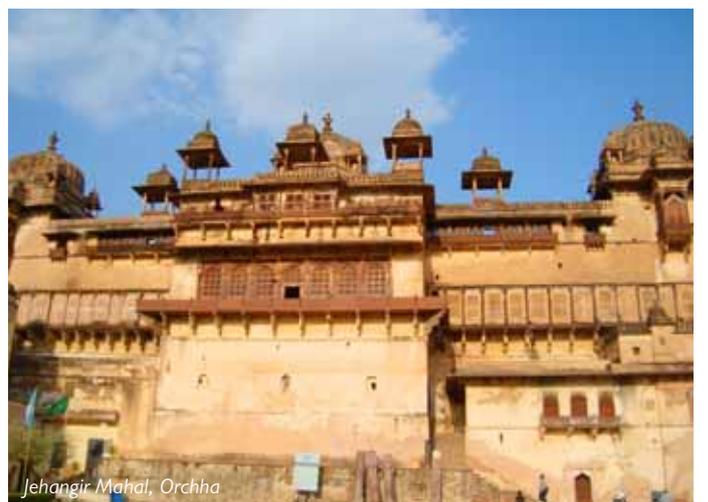




Sanchi Stupa, Bhopal



Western Group of Temples, Khajuraho ©Catherine Griffiths



Jehangir Mahal, Orchha

Following lunch, transfer to the Khajuraho airport for an afternoon flight to Varanasi, the holiest, and one of the most ancient cities of India, as well as the modern centre of Indian learning and scholarship.

Tonight, visit Dashashwamedh Ghat and take part in the evening Aarti Ceremony, in which lit butter candles and flowers are offered to deities, in the hope of prosperity and good fortune. Following the Aarti ceremony return to the hotel for a talk on Hinduism by a renowned Hindu scholar. **B L D**

Sat 6 Feb Varanasi

Early morning boat ride on the Ganges to watch dawn break over the city, and pilgrims and priests, holy men and washerwomen start their day. Later, take a walking tour through the Northern Bazaars and hidden alleys, visiting many famed shrines and monuments, including the mighty Vishwanath Mandir, the temple to Shiva, lord of transformation and the presiding deity of Varanasi.

Following lunch, explore Sarnath, a major Buddhist centre. After attaining enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, the Buddha went to Sarnath; it was here that he preached his first discourse in the deer park to set in motion the 'Wheel of the Dharma'. It is one of the most holy sites as in this place the stream of the Buddha's teaching first flowed. Spend time at Sarnath Museum, housing major icons of Buddhist art, including the Gupta Buddha.

In the evening visit an Old Haveli for a performance of Hindustani classical music on sitar accompanied by tabla. **B L D**

Sun 7 Feb Varanasi

This morning, explore the southern part of Varanasi with a walk through the mystical landscape of poets, sacred temples and holy ponds near Assi ghat. Walk in the footsteps of 16th century Banaras poet and mystic, Pandit Tulsi Das, who was the author of the Ram Charit Manas, the sacred Ramayana in Hindi.

Afternoon at leisure. **B L D**



Mon 8 Feb Varanasi – Bodh Gaya

Following breakfast, full day drive to Bodh Gaya (240km/6.5h).

Prince Siddhartha, after deciding to renounce the world in search of truth, arrived in Urvila (ancient name of Bodh Gaya), and sat beneath a Bodhi Tree, under vow to attain enlightenment; after six years of hard meditation, Prince Siddhartha became a buddha.

This evening join Jackie for a talk, prior to dinner in the hotel.

B L D

Tue 9 Feb Bodh Gaya

After breakfast, begin your exploration of Bodh Gaya. Visit The Mahabodhi Temple – an architectural amalgamation of many centuries and cultures. Architecture from Gupta and later ages, inscriptions describing visits of pilgrims from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and China are some examples. The Bodhi Tree is situated inside the temple premises: white, green, and red flags tied onto the tree form a canopy over seven sacred shrines, to symbolise Buddha's seven-week stay here.

Following lunch, visit The Buddha Archaeological Museum. **B L D**

Wed 10 Feb Bodh Gaya – Rajgir – Nalanda – Patna – Kolkata

After an early breakfast, journey to Rajgir (65km/2.5h) an important Buddhist pilgrimage site. Visit Gridhakuta, or Vulture Peak, the place where the Buddha preached many inspiring sermons, including the Lotus Sutra.

Continue to Nalanda (22km/1h), one of the world's great universities and an important Buddhist centre until its sacking by the Afghans in the 12th century. Visit the Nalanda Archaeological Museum which houses a significant collection of Pala and Mauryan statues.

Later continue to Patna airport (80km/2.5h) for the evening flight to Kolkata.

Kolkata, situated on the river Hooghly is the gateway to Eastern India – a city with a rich heritage, bustling streets and bewildering variety of facets. **B L D**



Thu 11 Feb

Kolkata

Today, begin with an introduction of Kolkata before British rule. Join two guides as they give you a totally different perspective of the city from two very different angles. One is an active follower of the Kali Cult, and will enlighten you with the Shakti cult and philosophy; while the other is a Kolkata history expert and storyteller, who will tell you the tale of old Kolkata which evolved around Kali, much before the British or any other foreign fortune trailer discovered the place.

Enjoy a heritage walking tour introducing you to the city known today as Kolkata. Visit the Vice Regel Palace, Calcutta High Court, St. John's Church, GPO, and the Town hall.

Following lunch, spend the afternoon at the Indian Museum, founded in 1814 at the cradle of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Kolkata. The Indian Museum is the oldest and largest museum in India and houses over 60 galleries divided into six prime sectors – Anthropology, Art, Geology, Archaeology, Zoology and Industry. It houses sublime sculptures from the important early Buddhist sire of Bharhut.

This evening celebrate the conclusion of the tour with a farewell dinner. **B L D**

Fri 12 Feb

Depart Kolkata

After breakfast drive to the Mullick Ghat Flower Market by the river Ganga, one of the oldest and vibrant markets of the city. Visit the Paresnath Jain temple of Kolkata, renowned for its enthralling beauty and its spiritual atmosphere. Continue on to the Marble Palace one of the best-preserved and most elegant houses of the 19th century.

Following lunch, visit the exterior Victoria Memorial Hall, a large marble building built between 1906 and 1921, to commemorate the peak of the British Empire in India.

Return to the hotel early afternoon to relax and complete some last minute packing. Check-out (6pm) and transfer to Kolkata airport for late evening departure on a Silk Air overnight flight to Singapore. **B L**

Sat 13 Feb

Singapore – Australia

Morning arrival in Singapore and transfer to connecting flight to Australia. Evening arrival in Australia.



Flower market, Kolkata

Tour prices

Per person, twin share	AUD 10,950
Single supplement*	AUD 1,970
Deposit per person	AUD 500
Final payment due	27 Nov 2015

*Single travellers may request to share. Please advise at time of booking.

Tour code AGI601

Fitness level Above average
Please see booking conditions for fitness level definitions.

Airline

Please contact Renaissance Tours for current airfares and flight reservations.

Visa

Australian Passport holders do require a visa for India.

Tour price includes

- Return international flights on Singapore Airlines in economy class. Upgrade to Business Class available (additional cost applies)
- Accommodation in centrally located hotels with private facilities and daily breakfast (**B**)
- Meals as per itinerary (**L** =Lunch, **D** =Dinner)
Wines with farewell meal.
- Transfer on arrival and departure (if travelling on suggested group flights)
- Comprehensive sightseeing, including local guides and entrance fees as per itinerary
- Domestic economy flights in India, Mumbai – Aurangabad – Bhopal // Khajuraho – Varanasi // Patna – Kolkata (15-20Kg luggage allowance depending on the airline)
- Executive chair class on train Bhopal to Jhansi
- Lectures and talks with your tour leader throughout
- Visa for India
- Gratuities for local guides and drivers
- Hotel portorage (one piece per person)

Tour price does not include

- Transfer on arrival and departure (if not travelling on suggested group flights)
- Drinks with meals, except Farewell meal
- Items of a personal nature (e.g. telephone, laundry, mini-bar, taxis etc.)
- Travel insurance (recommended)

Your hotels

Mumbai – The Trident Nariman Point ★★★★★
Aurangabad – Vivanta By Taj ★★★★★
Bhopal – Jehan Numa Palace ★★★★★
Orchha – The Orchha Resort ★★★★★
Khajuraho – Radisson Jass ★★★★★
Varanasi – Radisson ★★★★★
Bodh Gaya – The Royal Residency ★★★
Kolkata – The Oberoi Grand ★★★★★

NB. Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted

Terms & Conditions

HOW TO BOOK

Complete, sign and return the Booking Form available from Renaissance Tours with your deposit and page one of your passport.

DEPOSIT / FINAL PAYMENTS

Your deposit is due at the time of booking and is used to pay hotel, airline, performance tickets and/or other deposits. It is non-refundable in the event of your cancellation.

Final payment is due 60 days before departure. Failure to make the final payment by the due date may result in cancellation of your booking and loss of deposit.

Payment by cash, cheque, direct deposit, American Express, MasterCard and Visa is accepted. 1.5% service charge applies to payment made by MasterCard and Visa. 3% service charge applies to payment made by American Express.

Payments for some international airfares can be made by credit card without a service fee. Please check for details.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

a) Cancellation by You – Cancellation charges will be applied as shown below, calculated from the day written notification is received by Renaissance Tours. In addition to cancellation fees for tours operated by Renaissance Tours as shown below, airlines, hotels and other third parties may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

60 days or more	Forfeit of deposit
59 – 45 days	25% of tour cost
44 – 31 days	50% of tour cost
30 – 15 days	75% of tour cost
Less than 15 days	100% of tour cost

The above cancellation charges include applicable GST.

In addition to the above, cancellation charges may apply for additional arrangements booked by Renaissance Tours, such as air tickets, hotels and travel insurance premium. If the reason for cancellation is covered by the insurance policy, you may be able to reclaim these charges.

b) Cancellation by Us – We reserve the right to cancel a tour for any reason (such as failure to reach minimum tour participant numbers). Except for

force majeure, we will not cancel a tour less than 60 days before departure. No further compensation will be paid in the event of cancellation by Renaissance Tours. A full refund of monies paid for tour costs will be the full extent of our liability.

Cancellation and/or amendment fees may apply for additional travel arrangements booked by Renaissance Tours.

PASSPORTS, VISAS AND VACCINATIONS

All travellers must be in a possession of a valid passport – most countries require a 6-month validity from your date of entry or exit. For some countries (e.g. China, Vietnam, India, Russia), visas are included in the tour cost and will be arranged by Renaissance Tours prior to travel. For other countries, it is your responsibility to ensure you have the appropriate visa(s).

You are also responsible for obtaining all necessary inoculations and preventative medicines as may be required for the duration of the tour.

TOUR PRICES

Prices quoted in our tour information are based on exchange rates, cost of services and applicable taxes at the time of publication. Prices may be subject to change in the event of significant currency fluctuations or the introduction of new taxes, up until final payment is received.

In the event of a price increase, whether because of a currency fluctuation, increase in taxes or a correction in advertised prices, we will advise you and you have the option of accepting the amended prices, inclusions and booking conditions or withdrawing from the tour and receiving a full refund of all monies paid.

Once final payment is received, all prices will be guaranteed and no surcharges will apply.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is a condition of travel that you are covered by comprehensive travel insurance for international tours. Your travel insurance can be arranged by Renaissance Tours.

FITNESS AND PARTICIPATION

Most of our tours require a MODERATE level of fitness.

However, in certain destinations (e.g. Silk Road, Central Asia, Outback Australia, tropical destinations) or in certain seasons (e.g. mid-winter, mid-summer) or because of the nature of travel (e.g. remote rail), certain tours will require an ABOVE AVERAGE or CHALLENGING level of fitness.

If you (or we) have any doubts about your level of fitness, you may be required to have a doctor's appraisal. This would require your doctor to read the itinerary of your chosen tour, including the fitness level, and provide you (and us) with a written confirmation of your ability to participate.

MODERATE

For the overall benefit of the group, all tour members must possess a moderate level of mobility, including the ability to:

- negotiate airports and railway stations without wheelchair assistance
- use combined shower/bath facilities (it is impossible to guarantee walk-in shower facilities)
- undertake walking tour of 1–2 hours duration, including using stairs, walking over cobblestones and other uneven surfaces
- stand for long periods in museums and other sites
- embark / disembark coaches, trains and other methods of transportation without assistance
- handle your own luggage

ABOVE AVERAGE

In addition to the above, tour members must also be able to:

- undertake walking tours of 2–3 hours
- climb staircases of 100 or more steps

CHALLENGING

In addition to the above, tour members must also be able to:

- handle extremes of temperature (e.g. below 0 or above 35 degrees)
- handle extremes of altitudes (e.g. 4000 metres and above).

You can find the full terms & conditions at www.renaissancetours.com.au/booking-conditions or we would be happy to post you a copy on request.



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