



*The best thing I've ever done!*

# Service-Learning Tour Experience

## Bodhgaya, India – September 2017

The Transformative Service-Learning Tour, 2017 India, Bodhgaya, aims to offer a **unique opportunity to embark on a journey of personal and global development** whilst engaging in learning, reflection and reciprocity.

The tour's purpose is to allow participants to experience a **wide range of personal, social, inter- and intra-cultural transformational opportunities** whilst serving the school community of the Prajna Vihar School in Bodhgaya.

The Prajna Vihar School ([www.pvschool.in](http://www.pvschool.in)) started 25 years ago seeking to offer free education for very poor students who had no access to schooling. Tour participants will be sharing their skills with the PV school community in various areas; for example, teaching and conversing in English, music, sport, art, games and dance.

We will be living in Bodhgaya – a pilgrimage place in Bihar state – in a modest Buddhist temple guest house. The unique

make-up of the interreligious teaching and non-teaching staff of the school is overseen by the Missionary Sisters of the Queen of the Apostles ([www.srasisters.org](http://www.srasisters.org)).

The group of 12-14 participants will be guided by Kerstin Liebchen-Meades and takes place in the September

school holidays (16th Sept to 1 Oct 2017).

Participants will help at the school for four hours each morning. During the afternoons a host of interesting trips to neighbouring villages and places of interest are arranged. During this tour you have the opportunity to experience the real India in a safe, guided and enjoyable way.

The last four days of the tour will be spent at the beautiful Krishnamurti Foundation Centre on the banks of the Ganges, Varanasi.

The estimated **cost is \$2500** (this includes airfares, accommodation, food and all transport within India).

Those wanting to extend their trip may arrange alternative flight dates with our travel agent upon request.

**Contact Kerstin Liebchen-Meades:**  
[kliebchenm@gmail.com](mailto:kliebchenm@gmail.com) or phone 0422 041 469



*Giving unconditionally while enjoying a life-changing, inspiring, life-giving country! Was one of my most treasured experiences! Would do it all again in a heartbeat !!!*

*Paul Zillmann*

*"My girls and I loved our service tour to Bodhgaya. The children at PV school are just delightful and it was a pleasure to help them. We saw and experienced India in its true, wonderful colours – it was a wonderfully valuable and fun two weeks!"*

*Deborah Winfield*

# Itinerary

Sharing and having fun playing traditional chasy games at Prajna Vihar School.



Home away from home - <http://www.great-buddha-statue.com/Buddhist%20House.htm>



Travelling in Varanasi - the traditional way – by bicycle rickshaw.



Left: the lovely girls at Jeevan Jyoti School for the Blind. Right: children at an informal village school near Bodhgaya.



A mobile health clinic visiting one of the poorer villages on the outskirts of Bodhgaya.



The Rangoli painting competition at Prajna Vihar School.



Women of the Women's Empowerment Project learning to sew.



DAY 1 Saturday, 16/9/17 Depart Brisbane to India via Bangkok.

DAY 2 Sunday, 17/9/17 Arrive in Delhi and fly to Patna; travel to Bodhgaya via bus from Patna. Settle in to guesthouse, afternoon outing to school and local area.

DAY 3-10 Monday, 18/9/17 to Monday 25/9/17 Stay in Bodhgaya, attend school and participate in service learning. Sunday 24th – travel to historical sights surrounding Bodhgaya.

DAY 11 Tuesday, 26/9/17 Travel to Varanasi/Sarnath from Bodhgaya at mid-morning. Stay at Krishnamurti Centre.

DAY 12 Wednesday 27/9/17 Stay in Krishnamurti Ashram - reflect, meditate, enjoy surrounds & library

DAY 13 Thursday 28/9/17 Stay in Krishnamurti Centre. Afternoon boat trip to Varanasi.

DAY 14 Friday 29/9/17 Stay in Krishnamurti Centre. Visit to Sisters' affiliated school for the visually impaired in Sarnath.

DAY 15 Saturday 30/9/17 Depart KMC early morning for sightseeing of Varanasi and travel to airport for flight to Brisbane via Bangkok.

DAY 16 Sunday 1/10/17 Depart Bangkok for Brisbane - return flight to Australia - Arrive in Brisbane Sunday 1/10/17.



*I'd felt some trepidation about traveling to India, however any concerns quickly dissolved! Yes, it could be very noisy with horns blowing incessantly, the sweating was constant and the pollution was dreadful, however there were so many more wonderful and memorable experiences. Through Kerstin's expert selection of places to visit, we experienced the diversity of India, the beauty, generosity and resilience of her people and the deliciousness of Indian cooking! We visited a range of schools – those for the wealthy, the poor and the blind – where I learned that, despite the lack of resources, children love to learn.*

*We visited ancient and spiritual landmarks such as the Ganges river and the Mahabodhi Temple where we watched people performing rituals as they have done for a millennia. The Indian people are implicitly connected to their community. We were welcomed with smiles and shown generosity wherever we went. There were some tests and trials but overwhelmingly it was an experience I would gladly do all over again. Sharon Stott*