

Open Letter to All OWC Delegates on Visits to Organic Farms after OWC From the Organic Farming Association of India (India Host of OWC 2017)

Some people have informed us that they are contemplating a jetset style of participation in the OWC 2017. Jet in, jet out. This would break our heart. We Indians are the warmest, most generous, most hospitable people in the world. Though we have some defects (like everyone else), we would be most hurt if delegates -- especially delegates coming to India for the first time in their lives -- go back immediately after the OWC without seeing some beautiful parts of the country, meeting diverse organic farmer groups and seeing how they live and work. The India OWC experience -- without meeting people and farmers in their homes and fields -- would be simply incomplete.

So please stay on for a few days after the OWC. Confirm that decision after seeing the bargain-priced post-OWC "incredible India" tour plan we have drawn up for you with love. Only then make your return bookings. All tours end by 17th November, 2017. Of course, you can stay and travel after that if you want, and OFAI will advise you on that as well.

Please note that India remains one of the cheapest countries in the world, especially regarding food, accommodation, bus and train travel. Those who want to bypass the luxury hotel routes and air fares, can choose from an entire galaxy of modest lodgings, all of which can be booked on the net from any part of the world. Accommodation can be from \$10-15 onwards.

The OWC offers 7 post conference tours of organic farms. You will not regret your decision to join some of them.

Email your specific choices (with dates) in an email with subject "PC Tours" to: myofai@gmail.com.

Only then plan your return booking. Keep a few hours or half a day or a full day to seeing Delhi itself. It's a nice place and worth seeing.

Tours of organic farms post-OWC (Since the General Assembly of IFOAM takes place on 12-13 November, some tours are repeated for the benefit of IFOAM members as well)

Tour No.1:

Travel to SARG India (<http://sargindia.org>), Ramgarh (Uttarakhand) from November 11-13 (2 days, 60 euro):

November 11 night: Leave by night train from Delhi railway station to Nainital, on a visit to talk to, and live with, organic farmers from SARG India, and also see the Himalayas. Who knows whether you will ever get to see these magnificent mountain ranges again in your life-time! Since most of you don't believe in re-incarnation (like we good Indians do), the option of seeing them in your next life is also dim! So don't lose the opportunity!

November 12 morning: Picked up in ten seater buses, we drive from the railway station to SARG. We visit the popular tourist town of Nainital. All the arrangements are being made by SARG, so you are in very safe hands. At SARG you will eat only organically grown food. You can rest the night at SARG or with farmers in their homes. You will visit some farms.

November 13 morning: Visit organic farms and talk the entire day with organic farmers from the locality who want to meet their counterparts from other parts of the world. Leave the same night by train back to Delhi, arriving 14th November early at 6 am.

November 14: Go to the airport direct by metro, if your flights are in the morning. Stay in Delhi for the day, if your flights are in the evening. Location available in Delhi where you can keep your bags while you loaf the city.

The cost of the entire two day trip out of Delhi into the Himalayas (food, accommodation, transport) per person is 60 euro only! Our association is putting in some of its money. (People from better endowed economies, or big hearts or big wallets are welcome to pay more so that their counterparts from those countries less endowed can also join the tour.)

Tour No.2:

Travel to Bhaikaka Farms (<http://www.organichutbkk.com>) **Vadodara (Gujarat) November 11-13 (2 days, 60 euro):**

In this option, you travel by overnight train to Gujarat on India's west coast, where you will be welcomed by Sarvdaman Patel, India's most creative biodynamic farmer (also now President of the Biodynamic Association of India).

You depart for Vadodara from New Delhi on 11th November evening, arriving in Vadodara on 12th morning. You reach Bhaikaka Farms late morning, stay with Patel the entire day, have organic breakfast and lunch, with a 4 hour visit and study of his farm. With a packed snack, you catch a night train back to New Delhi, arriving there sometime in the morning of the 13th.

Tour No:3 (repeat tour):

Travel to SARG India (<http://sargindia.org>) **Ramgarh (Uttarakhand) November 13-15 (2 days, 60 euro):**

November 13, 2017 evening (post-GA): Spend the afternoon seeing some parts of Delhi, its monuments, visiting places like Old Delhi, using only the metro. Or visit organic farms in Delhi. Eat the best of food, cooked Indian style, in hundreds of places. Go shopping. Walk the gardens. Facility for safe storage of your bags in the city while you loaf.

November 13 night: Leave by night train from Delhi railway station to Nainital, on a visit to talk to, and live with, organic farmers from SARG India, and also see the Himalayas. Who knows whether you will ever get to see these magnificent mountain ranges again in your life-time! Since most of you don't believe in re-incarnation (like we good Indians do), the option of seeing them in your next life is also dim! So don't lose the opportunity!

November 14 morning: Picked up in ten seater buses, we drive from the railway station to SARG. We visit the popular tourist town of Nainital. All the arrangements are being made by SARG, so you are in very safe hands. At SARG you will eat only organically grown food. For the night, you can rest at SARG or with farmers in their homes. You will visit some farms.

November 15 morning: Visit organic farms and talk the entire day with organic farmers from the locality who want to meet their counterparts from other parts of the world. Leave the same night by train back to Delhi, arriving 16th November early at 6 am.

November 16: Go to the airport direct by metro, if your flights are in the morning. Stay in Delhi for the day, if your flights are in the evening. Location available in Delhi where you can keep your bags while you loaf the city.

The cost of the entire two day trip out of Delhi into the Himalayas (food, accommodation, transport) per person is 60 euro only! Our association is putting in some of its money. (People from better endowed economies or big hearts are welcome to pay for themselves and for counterparts from those countries less endowed.)

Tour No.4 (repeat tour):

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You depart for Vadodara from New Delhi on 13th November evening, arriving in Vadodara on 14th morning. You reach Bhaikaka Farms late morning, stay with Patel the entire day, have organic breakfast and lunch, with a 4 hour visit and study of his farm. With a packed snack, you catch a night train back to New Delhi, arriving there sometime in the morning of the 15th.

Tour No.5:

Travel to Akshayakalpa (www.akshayakalpa.org), **via Bengaluru (Karnataka) November 13-15 (2 days, 150 euro):**

The visit is to the extraordinary organic dairy project, three hours drive from Bengaluru airport. The dairies, village level, small, generate methane for their power requirements. They are fully organic.

We leave Delhi sometime on 13th November, arrive in Bengaluru by air two hours later, travel to Tiptur the same evening.

On 14th, we visit the entire project of Akshakalpa. We return on 15th night or 16th, as per preference. Those who want to

visit Bengaluru can do so as well.

The rate for this field trip is higher due to the need to travel by air, which is subject to dynamic pricing and therefore depends on demand.

Tour No.6:

SARG India (<http://sargindia.org>) **Roorki (Uttarakhand). All about organic sugar. (2 days, 60 euro). November 14-16.**

OWC participants will take the trip to Roorki (West Uttarakhand) 200 km from NOIDA (conference venue). Travel by bus, etc. At Roorki, they can interact with a 500 strong organic farmers' federation. These farmers primarily grow sugarcane as well as process it organically and make sugar, jaggery powder and jaggery.

November 14 evening: Leave for Roorki, spend the day with farmers the whole day, catch the night bus back to Delhi on 15th night, arriving in Delhi on 16th morning.

Tour No.7:

Travel to SARG India (<http://sargindia.org>) Akola (Maharashtra) (2 days, 100 euro) November 15-17

OWC delegates with travel to Vidarbha, Maharashtra in western India, known to the world as a distressed and suicide prone region.

SARG has worked with the State Government of Maharashtra and has successfully shown how biodynamic farming has turned around the lives of distressed farmers. Farmers will travel from Delhi to Akola by train, stay will be organized at University / Ved Nandani Agro-Tourism center. SARG has an office in Akola. Farmers can learn about a number of horticulture crops like banana, citrus, pomegranate as well as crops like cotton, pulses, sugarcane etc., all grown biodynamically.

Travel to Akola and back will be by train, departing Delhi on 14th and returning on 17th.

Each group will have a Group Leader assigned by SARG who will manage the tour so no one will get lost or face any problems.

Since we need to make train and bus bookings in advance, please confirm early. Pay the due charges during the OWC. But above all else, plan the return to your country only after making a decision on these tours.

If you have any specific queries, or wish to stay even longer and need advice, please do not hesitate to ask. India is not an expensive place by any stretch of the imagination. It has expensive places, but one can avoid them and live and travel quite modestly all the time.

Visiting the Taj Mahal (One full day needed)

For those who wish to visit the Taj Mahal (one of the 7 Wonders of the World), check out the options already made available by the official travel agent of the OWC, which can be accessed at: www.owc.ifoam.bio. Best option is that the travel agent will send an exclusive Volvo bus with OWC delegates if he has a minimum number of participants. Ideally, these buses would leave for the Taj Mahal on 12th (for non-GA members) and 14th (for GA members).

But should you want to go to visit this historic monument on your own, this is entirely possible. Note the following:

For a comfortable, unhurried visit to the Taj Mahal, you must set aside one full day for the purpose. You can go in the morning and return in the evening. You can go there by bus (Volvo services), train or share a taxi.

If you want to go by train, three superfast trains leave everyday morning from New Delhi (except Friday) and you can return by the same trains, reaching Delhi the same night. The fare is Rs.100 to 370 (one way). Faster trains cost Rs.755 (one way).

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To this you should add the Taj entrance fee which is as follows:

All foreigners (Rs.1000/14 euro)

All SAARC foreigners (Rs.530/7 euro)

These entrance tickets can be booked on the net, so you do not have to stand in line at the monument itself. The OWC secretariat can help you with this at the congress venue.

There are also public buses that take 4-5 hours from New Delhi bus stand to Agra city, where the Taj is located. This options enables you to see Indian life all the way to Agra.

Claude Alvares

Organic Farming Association of India
India Host for OWC 2017



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