



Indian
Sub-continent

Songs of Rajasthan and the Ganges with Stuart Davis



trip highlights

- Travel with Sydney choir master Stuart Davis, sharing songs and discovering how music opens a window into India's culture and traditions
- Spend three days immersed in the Rajasthan International Folk Festival (RIFF) within spectacular Mehrangarh Fort
- Experience the powerful sound of live Qawwali at Delhi's Nizamuddin Dargah, an intimate introduction to India's Sufi devotional music
- Ride camels into the Thar Desert and share music and song around the fire beneath the stars
- Experience Varanasi's musical and spiritual traditions, sharing songs with local musicians on the Ganges



Trip Duration	14 days	Trip Code: SRSD
Grade	Adventure touring	
Activities	Festivals, Singing and Music, Cultural Immersion	
Summary	11 nights boutique and heritage hotels, 1 night luxury desert camp, 1 night sleeper train	

welcome to World Expeditions

On a World Expeditions adventure you can expect great value, high quality, active, expedition style adventure travel experiences on all seven continents. Our story began 50 years ago, when the mountains of Nepal inspired our first trek. Since then, we've pioneered many adventure travel firsts, all driven by our goal to provide active and adventurous travellers with BIG adventures that leave a small footprint on the people and places we visit. If you're curious to wander down the paths less travelled, we invite you to join us on our Songs of Rajasthan and the Ganges with Stuart Davis.

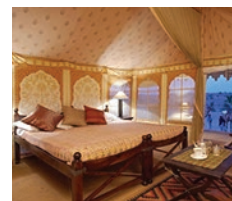
why travel with World Expeditions?

Since 1975, we've been designing and leading small group adventure travel experiences that take you beyond the obvious and into the extraordinary. Our extra attention to detail and seamless operations on the ground ensure that you will have a memorable experience in India. Our adventures have always sought to benefit the local peoples we interact with, safeguard the ecosystems we explore and contribute to the sustainability of travel in the regions we experience. You will be accompanied by trip leader throughout whose knowledge and passion for India will add a unique dimension to your trip



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We'll do our best to pair you with a traveller of the same gender. If we can't, the single supplement applies.

Our team will be happy to quote on airfares, travel insurance and additional hotel nights in Delhi if you wish.

the trip

Join Sydney-based choir master Stuart Davis on an extraordinary musical journey through northern India, travelling through the vibrant cities of Delhi, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur, and culminating on the sacred banks of the Ganges in Varanasi. A highlight of the journey is the renowned Rajasthan International Folk Festival (RIFF), set against the dramatic backdrop of Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur. Here, ancient folk traditions blend with contemporary global influences.

Each day begins with relaxed morning singing sessions guided by Stuart, welcoming all voices and experience levels. You don't need to be an accomplished singer, but you should come with an enthusiasm for singing and a willingness to participate in the musical experiences that are central to the journey. The itinerary also features a moving Qawwali performance in Delhi's Nizamuddin Dargah, where the powerful devotional music of the Sufi tradition comes to life. In Rajasthan's Thar Desert, enjoy an unforgettable stay in a tented camp with camel rides and fireside singing beneath the stars, while in Varanasi, experience the profound atmosphere of India's spiritual heart with a boat journey on the Ganges, sharing song as you travel along this sacred river. Complementing these musical experiences are guided explorations of India's architectural and cultural treasures, from the bustling lanes of Old Delhi, to the majestic palaces and forts of Rajasthan.

The tour is designed for travellers who want to be active participants in that musical journey. Blending participatory music, cultural discovery and meaningful local experiences, this small-group tour offers a unique opportunity to experience India through the universal language of song.

about your leader/escort

Stuart Davis is a respected figure in Sydney's choir and community music scene, known for his warmth, depth of musical knowledge and passion for connecting people through song. For over a decade, he's led singing journeys around the world from Morocco to Cuba, Georgia to Italy, with a deep interest in how music reflects local history, identity and resilience.

Stuart has a longstanding curiosity about India and its musical traditions. His travels through Rajasthan and Ladakh have taken him in search of local music and cultural experiences, inspiring him to return to Rajasthan and explore its music, people and traditions more deeply.

At home, Stuart directs three community choirs, performs with his roots band Big Merino, sings in the Heavenly Light Quartet, and works on inclusive music programs including the Big Heart Sing at the Sydney Opera House and the NSW Boys' Vocal Program. Travelling with Stuart means enjoying music in wonderful places, learning about local traditions, and sharing the simple joy of singing with like-minded people.

at a glance

DAY 1	06 OCT - ARRIVE DELHI
DAY 2	07 OCT - OLD DELHI & SUFI QAWWALI
DAY 3	08 OCT - DISCOVER DELHI
DAY 4	09 OCT - DELHI & OVERNIGHT TRAIN TO JAISALMER
DAY 5	10 OCT - WELCOME TO THE GOLDEN CITY JAISALMER
DAY 6	11 OCT - JAISALMER FORT, HAVELIS & FOLK MUSIC
DAY 7	12 OCT - A NIGHT IN THE THAR DESERT
DAY 8	13 OCT - JODHPUR & THE RAJASTHAN INTERNATIONAL FOLK FESTIVAL (RIFF)
DAY 9	14 OCT - RAJASTHAN INTERNATIONAL FOLK FESTIVAL
DAY 10	15 OCT - RAJASTHAN INTERNATIONAL FOLK FESTIVAL
DAY 11	16 OCT - FLY ON TO VARANASI
DAY 12	17 OCT - MUSIC & TRADITIONS OF VARANASI

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trip dates

2027 06 Oct - 19 Oct

fast facts

Visas:
Required*

Vaccinations:
Please consult a travel vaccination specialist for up to date information

Leader:
Expert Local Leader & Escort

adventure travel

By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected. Remote areas are sometimes unpredictable and itineraries may be altered. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise.

important note

The itinerary should be seen as a guide only. This itinerary may change at any time due to inclement weather, forces of nature and other circumstances beyond our control.

DAY 13 18 OCT - SONGS ALONG THE GANGES
DAY 14 19 OCT - TOUR CONCLUDES IN VARANASI

additional deposits required

This tour requires an additional deposit in order to secure accommodation during the popular festival times. The price of your trip includes these accommodations, and so this should be viewed simply as prepayment, not an additional cost. The balance payment for this tour will be due 90 days prior to trip commencement.

We encourage our travellers to have their travel insurance in place as soon as they pay monies towards their holidays, including this tour deposit.

what's included

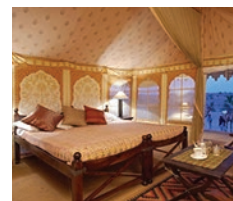
- Hosted by choir master Stuart Davis
- English speaking local guide
- 11 nights boutique and heritage hotels on a twin share basis
- 1 night luxury desert camp on a twin share basis
- Internal flight Jodhpur to Varanasi on day 11
- Overnight Train Delhi-Jaisalmer in AC sleeper on a twin share basis
- Private air conditioned vehicle transport throughout
- Sightseeing as listed in itinerary
- Two day pass for RIFF Jodhpur festivals - days 9 & 10 (opening evening is unticketed)
- 13 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 6 dinners
- Camel ride at desert camp
- Chunar Fort excursion by boat with local musicians in Varanasi
- Morning boat ride on the Ganges
- Delhi airport transfer on day 1, and when you book pre tour accommodation with World Expeditions
- Entrance fees Delhi: Qutub Minar, National Crafts Museum, Humayun's Tomb, Red Fort and Dilli Haat
- Entrance fees Jaisalmer: Bara Bagh (Royal Cenotaphs), Jain temple in the Fort and Patwa Haveli & Nathmalji ki Haveli
- Entrance fees Varanasi: Sarnath

what's not included

- International flights
- Travel from Varanasi on day 14
- Travel Insurance - compulsory
- Visa
- Single supplement when booked in your own room (limited availability)
- Meals and beverages not listed in the itinerary
- Tips

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detailed itinerary

DAY 1 06 Oct - Arrive Delhi

Arrive in Delhi where you will be met and transferred to your hotel. As many flights arrive late, this day is kept free to allow time to rest and settle in before the group journey begins the following morning.

Overnight: Hotel Maidens, New Delhi

meals: NIL

DAY 2 07 Oct - Old Delhi & Sufi Qawwali

Begin the day singing with Stuart and the group before continuing your exploration of Delhi. Visit the Qutub Minar complex, where intricate carvings and towering stonework reflect the city's early Indo-Islamic architecture. Enjoy lunch together at Café Lota, a relaxed contemporary Indian café within the National Crafts Museum, known for dishes inspired by regional cuisines from across India. After lunch, explore the Crafts Museum, where India's rich craft traditions are represented through textiles, pottery, woodwork and other forms. Continue to Humayun's Tomb, a beautifully proportioned Mughal garden tomb that later influenced the design of the Taj Mahal.

As evening falls, visit Nizamuddin Dargah for a Qawwali performance. In this atmospheric setting, experience the tradition of Sufi devotional music, with voices, harmonium and percussion coming together in a powerful live performance.

Overnight: Hotel Maidens, New Delhi

meals: B,L

DAY 3 08 Oct - Discover Delhi

Begin the day with a singing session with Stuart before setting out to explore Old Delhi. Visit the imposing Red Fort, one of the great landmarks of the Mughal era, and nearby Jama Masjid, one of Delhi's best-known mosques. Continue with the Salaam Baalak Trust "Street Walk", a guided walk that offers a different perspective on the city through the experiences of young people who have moved away from life on the streets. As we walk through the busy streets and neighbourhoods of Old Delhi, hear their stories and learn about the work of the Trust in supporting vulnerable children. We then stop for lunch at Haveli Dharampura, a restored haveli in the heart of Old Delhi. The rest of the day is free to explore, shop or relax.

Overnight: Hotel Maidens, New Delhi

meals: B,L

DAY 4 09 Oct - Delhi & overnight train to Jaisalmer

Enjoy a relaxed morning in Delhi. Later, we visit Dilli Haat, a lively open-air market that brings together crafts, textiles and regional foods from across India. It is a great place to browse colourful stalls, meet artisans and perhaps pick up some locally made handicrafts before we leave Delhi.

At 4:30pm, we transfer to the railway station and board our overnight train bound for Jaisalmer.

Overnight: Swarn Nagri Express Train

meals: B

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DAY 5 10 Oct - Welcome to the Golden City Jaisalmer

After our overnight train journey, we arrive in Jaisalmer, an extraordinary desert city rising from the sands of the Thar Desert. Built almost entirely from golden sandstone, the city glows honey-gold, earning it the nickname The Golden City. For centuries, Jaisalmer prospered as an important trading centre on the ancient camel caravan routes linking India with Central Asia and beyond, and much of its beautifully preserved architecture reflects this rich merchant history. There is time to relax at the hotel after our journey before we venture out in the late afternoon to Bara Bagh, a peaceful collection of intricately carved sandstone chhatris (royal cenotaphs) set against the desert landscape. Built over several centuries, these elegant memorials honour the Maharajas of Jaisalmer and are at their most atmospheric as the late afternoon light bathes the sandstone in warm golden hues. This evening we enjoy a colourful cultural performance of traditional Rajasthani folk music and dance, providing an introduction to the rich artistic traditions of the desert communities. This evening we gather for dinner at a rooftop restaurant overlooking the illuminated fort, accompanied by traditional Rajasthani folk song.

Overnight: Hotel Rang Mahar, Jaisalmer

meals: B,D

DAY 6 11 Oct - Jaisalmer Fort, havelis & folk music

This morning we come together for another singing session with Stuart before setting out to explore more of Jaisalmer, one of India's most remarkable fortified cities. Our first stop is Gadisar Lake, a peaceful reservoir built in the 14th century that once provided the city's precious water supply. Fringed by temples, shrines and intricately carved gateways, it remains a tranquil introduction to the desert city. From here we continue to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Jaisalmer Fort, one of the world's few living forts, where thousands of people still live and work within its ancient sandstone walls. Wandering through its narrow lanes reveals a fascinating maze of homes, Jain temples, artisan workshops and cafés. After lunch, we visit some of Jaisalmer's beautifully carved havelis, the grand merchant mansions that reflect the wealth generated by the city's position on the historic camel trading routes. Their intricate sandstone façades are among the finest examples of Rajasthani craftsmanship.

Overnight: Hotel Rang Mahar, Jaisalmer

meals: B

DAY 7 12 Oct - A night in the Thar Desert

A relaxed morning, including our daily singing session with Stuart, before departing in the afternoon for our stay in the desert. As the landscape opens out into sand dunes and sparse desert vegetation, we gain a sense of Rajasthan's more remote and arid landscapes. We arrive at the resort for lunch and some time to relax, waiting until the heat of the day has eased before continuing to our desert camp. In the late afternoon, we drive on to camp and settle into our luxury tented accommodation for the night. As the sun begins to set, we head out on a camel ride through the dunes, with the fading light bringing out the rich tones and textures of the desert landscape. In the evening, we gather around the fire for traditional folk music under the stars.

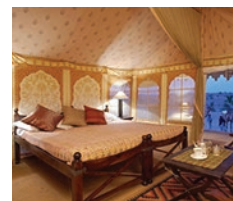
Drive: 3 hours

Overnight: Manvar Sevan desert camp

meals: B,D

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DAY 8 13 Oct - Jodhpur & the Rajasthan International Folk Festival (RIFF)

After a morning of song, we hit the road for Jodhpur. Set on the edge of the Thar Desert, Jodhpur is known as the “Blue City,” with a maze of indigo-painted houses clustered beneath the towering Mehrangarh Fort. Founded in 1459, Jodhpur has long been an important trading centre, and its old town still reflects this history, with narrow lanes, bustling markets and traditional homes packed tightly within the city walls. Set within the dramatic setting of Mehrangarh Fort, the Rajasthan International Folk Festival (RIFF) is one of India’s leading celebrations of traditional music. Our journey is timed to coincide with the festival, where centuries-old folk traditions are performed alongside contemporary sounds, with artists from across India and around the world gathering in a unique and atmospheric setting.

Drive: 2 hours

Overnight: Pal Haveli, Jodhpur

meals: B

DAY 9 14 Oct - Rajasthan International Folk Festival

Spend the day and evening immersed in the festival. Recognised as one of India’s leading music festivals, RIFF celebrates the traditional music of Rajasthan while bringing together artists from across India and around the world. The festival’s international patron is Mick Jagger, reflecting its global reach and reputation. Performances take place across a series of atmospheric venues within the fort, from intimate daytime sessions to larger evening concerts. Music ranges from centuries-old folk traditions to contemporary interpretations, with a focus on rhythm, voice and storytelling. As night falls, the fort comes alive with open-air performances under the stars.

Overnight: Pal Haveli, Jodhpur

meals: B,D

DAY 10 15 Oct - Rajasthan International Folk Festival

Continue your time at the Rajasthan International Folk Festival. Alongside the music, the festival offers a rich introduction to Rajasthani food and performance. Local cuisine reflects the desert environment, with dishes developed to suit a dry climate and traditionally prepared using spices, grains and preserved ingredients. Throughout the day, explore performances that extend beyond music, including traditional dance and poetic storytelling.

For those wanting a change of pace from the festival, there is also the option to join a half day visit to a Bishnoi village, around one hour’s drive from Jodhpur. Accompanied by a local guide, spend time in the village and visit local homes for an insight into community life and the crafts practised here, including weaving, pottery and block printing. The visit also includes time at a textile cooperative, where you can watch a demonstration, see examples of locally produced textiles and, if you wish, purchase directly from the cooperative. Allow around four to five hours for the excursion, returning to the hotel in Jodhpur afterwards. Alternatively, remain at RIFF and continue enjoying the festival program.

Overnight: Pal Haveli, Jodhpur

meals: B,D

DAY 11 16 Oct - Fly on to Varanasi

Today is largely a travel day as we fly from Jodhpur to Varanasi, arriving in the late afternoon. One of the world’s oldest continuously inhabited cities, Varanasi sits on the banks of the Ganges River and is considered the spiritual heart of India. For centuries,

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pilgrims have come here to bathe in the sacred waters, perform rituals and mark life's most important moments along the river's ghats - a series of steps and riverfront spaces leading down to the water.

Our home for the next three nights is Hotel Ganges View, a simple but characterful heritage hotel occupying a superb position overlooking the river at Assi Ghat. While more modest than some of our other hotels, it offers comfortable air-conditioned rooms with private ensembles, warm hospitality and an unbeatable location. We'll have the entire property to ourselves, giving us a wonderfully relaxed and private setting for our singing sessions with Stuart during our stay. After settling in, we take an evening walk along the nearby ghats for our first experience of life beside the Ganges. We enjoy your dinner at a rooftop restaurant, a short walk from the hotel.

Overnight: Hotel Ganges View, Varanasi

meals: B,D

DAY 12 17 Oct - Music & traditions of Varanasi

We begin early morning as Varanasi gradually comes to life along the banks of the river Ganges. Chanting, music and movement unfold in the soft morning light, offering a memorable introduction to daily life and worship along the river. There will also be time today for our own singing practice under Stuart's guidance, continuing to develop the music we have been sharing throughout the tour. Our exploration of Varanasi includes the Vishwanath Temple and Sarnath Stupa, followed by a traditional thali lunch at Shivaay restaurant. This evening brings the musical story of Varanasi to the fore with a visit to one of the city's renowned musical gharanas, or traditional schools of music. Here we gain an insight into Varanasi's deep-rooted musical heritage and have another opportunity for shared singing, a special chance to connect our own musical experience with the traditions of the city around us.

Overnight: Hotel Ganges View, Varanasi

meals: B,L

DAY 13 18 Oct - Songs along the Ganges

Our final full day begins with singing practice together under Stuart's guidance before we set out for Chunar Fort by boat. Local musicians join us on board, and as we travel along the Ganges there will be opportunities to listen, sing and share music together. With life unfolding along the riverbanks around us, it's a fitting culmination of the musical experiences we have shared throughout the tour. With music accompanying us and life unfolding along the riverbanks, this promises to be a memorable culmination of the musical experiences we have shared throughout the tour. Our boat journey finishes in the ghat area in time to witness the evening aarti ceremony. Here, chanting, music, ritual and light come together on the banks of the Ganges. Tonight we gather for a farewell dinner.

Overnight: Hotel Ganges View, Varanasi

meals: B,D

DAY 14 19 Oct - Tour concludes in Varanasi

After breakfast, our time together comes to an end. Thank you for being part of this shared musical and cultural experience through India.

Airport or railway station transfers are available today for those returning to Delhi. We are happy to help with your individual onward travel arrangements. For those not quite ready to say goodbye to India, an optional extension will also be available to visit the Taj Mahal.

meals: B

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This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

climate

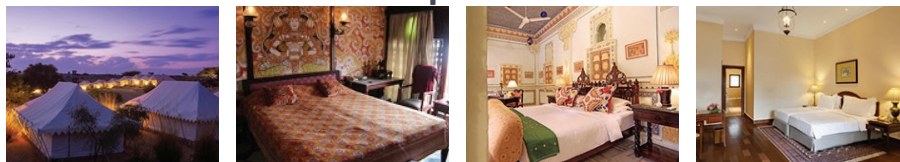
Travel during October offers a very favourable time to explore northern India, as the monsoon season has typically come to an end and the landscape is fresh and green. Days are generally warm, with temperatures ranging from the mid 20s to low 30sC (77-90F), while mornings and evenings are far cooler.

In Rajasthan (Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and the desert region), conditions are dry with plenty of sunshine, making it ideal for sightseeing and time outdoors. Delhi and Varanasi can still feel warm and occasionally humid.

dietary requirements

We are able to cater for vegetarian diets and can assist with medically recommended diets (allergies and intolerances). Please ensure you discuss your requirements with us well in advance. We are unable to guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip, and therefore, we strongly encourage that travellers with life-threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Travellers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.

accommodation on the trip



A carefully selected range of heritage hotels and unique stays have been chosen for their great location and distinctive character. We have detailed our intended accommodations however these are subject to change, in which case a property of equal standard will be provided.

what you carry

In your daypack you will need to carry extra warm clothing (depending on the altitude, location and weather), a rainjacket, water bottle, camera gear, valuables and personal items such as sunscreen, lip-eze etc. All group gear and your luggage is moved by our team.

visas

India Entry Requirements – Three Mandatory Online Applications

Before travelling to India, all eligible travellers must complete the following three mandatory online applications:

e-Visa (Electronic Travel Authorisation) – Apply before travel (applications open up to 120 days before arrival).

e-Arrival Card – Complete online within 72 hours prior to arrival.

Health Self-Declaration Form (Air Suvidha) – Complete online within 24 hours prior to arrival for Ebola screening requirements.

Please ensure all three applications have been completed before you depart for India, as failure to do so may result in delays at airline check-in or immigration on arrival.

India Entry Requirements

1. Mandatory: e-Visa (Electronic Travel Authorisation)

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All eligible foreign nationals must obtain an electronic visa (e-Visa) before travelling to India. Visas are not available on arrival.

This applies to citizens of eligible countries including Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

When to Apply

Applications can be submitted up to 120 days before your arrival in India.

We strongly recommend applying well in advance of your departure.

Official application website:

<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>

Important Information

Print a hard copy of your approved e-Visa and carry it with you, as it may be requested at airline check-in and immigration.

Your passport must be machine-readable and in good condition. Handwritten or damaged passports may be refused.

Your visa will be electronically verified and stamped on arrival.

Immigration processing times can be lengthy.

e-Visas are only accepted at designated airports and seaports. Please ensure your arrival point is eligible before travelling.

Tourist e-Visas are generally available for 30 days or one year. Please check with your World Expeditions reservations consultant to confirm the appropriate visa for your itinerary.

Apply only through the official Government of India website. We recommend avoiding third-party visa agencies.

2. Mandatory: e-Arrival Card

All foreign travellers must complete an e-Arrival Card within 72 hours prior to arrival in India.

This requirement applies to:

All foreign passport holders, including Australian citizens.

Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders.

Official application website:

<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/earrival/>

How to Complete the e-Arrival Card

Have your passport, visa (if applicable), flight details and accommodation information available.

Visit the official website above.

Complete the online form with your personal, passport and travel information.

Submit the form before departing for India.

We recommend completing the e-Arrival Card as early as possible within the 72-hour window before your flight.

3. Mandatory: Health Self-Declaration Form (Air Suvidha)

Travellers are required to complete the online Health Self-Declaration Form (Air Suvidha) for Ebola screening within 24 hours before arrival in India.

If you do not complete the form before travelling, you may experience delays and additional health screening on arrival.

Official application website:

<https://airsuvidha.civilaviation.gov.in/>

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Important: Entry requirements can change at short notice. If you have any questions or require assistance with your visa or entry requirements, please contact your World Expeditions reservations consultant, who will be happy to assist you.

Please bear in mind that visas may be required for countries you are visiting en route or transiting through on the way to your destination. It is important that you check the requirements of all countries you will visit.

carbon neutral

We focus on measuring and reducing emissions rather than relying on carbon offsets. Our Carbon Labels estimate a trip's emissions from accommodation, meals, ground transport, activities and guiding. The calculations are done independently by the carbon consultancy ecollective.

The labels don't include international flights, which are often the biggest part of your footprint. You can reduce yours by flying direct, flying economy, and travelling less often but for longer.

For more detail, go to Climate Action under Responsible Travel on our website.

how to book

Bookings can be made online at www.worldexpeditions.com

A non refundable deposit is required at the time of booking. This is higher than our standard deposit due to deposits paid in advance to secure the accommodation for the festivals.

We are very happy to quote on airfares, along with additional hotel nights and travel insurance.