A Pilgrimage in the footsteps of St. Thomas in India 2017

15 Days  February 17 - March 2, 2017
Feb. 17 – Depart USA
Depart on your international flights.

Feb. 18 – Arrive Late Evening – Chennai
Welcome to India! You are met by our representative outside the baggage claim area of the airport after you clear all immigration and customs formalities. Transfer to hotel for your stay.

Feb. 19 – Chennai – Fort St. George / St. Mary’s Church / Fort Museum / Mysore – St. Thomas Church / Optional visit to National Art Gallery (Chennai)
This morning, proceed on a city tour of Chennai starting with Fort St. George, the first establishment of the British in India. Initially erected as a trading post, it later served as the origin of the modern Indian Army. You’ll visit St. Mary's Church, one of the oldest surviving churches built by the British in India. The Fort Museum holds many remembrances of the East India Company and the British period. Proceed to Mysore, which was inhabited in the 16th century by the Portuguese to visit the Saint Thomas Church. Saint Thomas (Doubting Thomas) came to Chennai in 52 AD and was killed at St. Thomas Mount just outside the city in 78 AD. This afternoon, you’ll visit the National Art Gallery, home to artwork dating as far back as the 11th Century.

Feb. 20 – Flight to Trichy / Drive to Velankanni – Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health (Velankanni)
Fly to Trichy (Luggage allowance on this flight is 33 lbs. for checked baggage and 15 lbs. for carry-ons). On arrival, drive to Velankanni and check-in to your accommodations. You’ll visit the Catholic shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Health, the Madonna of Velankanni, locally known as the ‘Sacred Arogya Matha Church’. The Catholic Basilica is popularly known as the "Lourdes of the East". Annually, 20 million pilgrims flock to the shrine from all over India and abroad.

Feb. 21 – Late morning drive to Trichy / Flight to Cochin
Start the day with a late morning drive to Trichy and a connect flight for Cochin via Chennai (Luggage allowance on this flight is 33 lbs. for checked baggage and 15 lbs. for carry-ons). On arrival, you will have an assisted transfer to the hotel and check-in to your accommodations.

Feb. 22 – City Tour – St. Francis Church / Santa Cruz Basilica / Optional evening visit to local Kathakali dance drama. (Cochin)
In the morning, begin your city tour from Mattancherry. This is a historical part of India, where the ancient Jews started their trading. This neighborhood is now famous for antique showrooms. You will visit India’s oldest Jewish Synagogue, built in 1568, it was destroyed by the Portuguese and rebuilt by the Dutch a century later. Next, visit the cantilevered Chinese fishing nets, lined at the entrance to the harbor mouth. Continue on to the Dutch Palace, built in 1555, its coronation hall and murals at Ramayana are noteworthy features. This afternoon, visit the St. Francis Church, built in 1503. It is the oldest European Church in India and was the original burial place of the Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama, who died in Kochi in 1524. Fourteen years later, his remains were removed to Lisbon. Next visit Santa Cruz Basilica, one of the eight basilicas in India. It is a place of devotion as well as a center of historic significance, endowed with architectural and artistic grandeur and colours of the gothic style. Built originally by the Portuguese and elevated to a Cathedral by Pope Paul IV in 1558, it was spared by the Dutch conquerors who destroyed many Catholic buildings.

Bishop D. João Gomes Ferreira commissioned a new building in 1887. Consecrated in 1905, Santa Cruz was proclaimed a Basilica by Pope John Paul II in 1984.

Feb. 23 – Day trip to Malayattoor – Kurisumudy (St. Thomas hill) / Kerala (Cochin)
Take an excursion to the village of Malayattoor in the North Eastern corner of Ernakulam district, about 47 km from Cochin. The name ‘Malayattoor’ is an amalgamation of "Mountain", "River" and "Place". Situated at Kurisumudy is a church dedicated to St. Thomas, who is believed to have prayed at this shrine. The Church has a life-size statue of St. Thomas and the imprint of the feet of the Apostle on a rock. One of the most important Christian pilgrim centers in Kerala, this shrine attracts devotees in very large numbers and was promoted to Archdiocesan status by Archbishop Mar Varkey Vithayathil on September 4, 1998.

Feb. 24 – Morning flight to Goa / Walking Tour of Fontainhas (Latin Quarter)
This morning, fly to Goa (Luggage allowance on this flight is 33 lbs. for checked baggage and 15 lbs. for carry-ons). On arrival, you will have an assisted transfer to the hotel and check-in to your accommodations. In the afternoon, proceed on a walking tour of Fontainhas – the old Latin quarter. End the day after a drive to Panjim to visit the well preserved Immaculate Conceição church and nearby market area.

Feb. 25 – Basilica of Bom Jesus / Cathedral of St. Catherine / Church and Convent of St. Francis of Assisi / St. Cajetan’s Church (Goa)
Visit the Basilica of Bom Jesus Church, built in 1695. The church of Bom Jesus, “Good” or “Infant” Jesus, is known principally for the tomb of St. Francis Xavier. In 1946, it became the first church of India to be elevated to the status of Minor Basilica. The basilica, where the mortal remains of St. Francis Xavier are kept, is the best specimen of baroque architecture in India. St. Francis Xavier now lies in an airtight glass coffin, placed inside a silver casket fashioned by a 17th century Florentine jeweller. Continue to the imposing Cathedral of St. Catherine—the largest church in Asia, which has 14 altars. Next, visit the Church & Convent of St. Francis of Assisi, the former palace of the Archbishop that connects the Cathedral to the Convent and Church of St. Francis of Assisi. The convent, which forms an annexure to the church, now houses the Archaeological Museum. Later, visit the church of St. Cajetan’s Church, which is modelled on the original design of St. Peter’s Church in Rome.

Feb. 26 – Morning flight to Mumbai / Mount Mary’s Church / St. Thomas Cathedral
You’ll fly to Mumbai (Luggage allowance on this flight is 33 lbs. for checked baggage and 15 lbs. for carry-ons). On your transfer to the hotel, stop en route at the Mount Mary Church, a catholic basilica in Bandra. Overlooking the Arabian Sea, it is one of the prominent churches in Mumbai and home to the revered Madonna of Mount Mary. Also, visit St. Thomas' Cathedral; the city's first Anglican Church is situated in the heart of the commercial fort area. The foundation was laid in 1672 during the governorship of Gerald Augier, and was opened to public on the Chris Atmas Day in 1718, and subject to a number of later additions. Though simple in structure, the interior of the Church has some exquisite art adoration.
Feb. 27 – Gateway to India / Queen’s Necklace Drive / Parsi Tower of Silence / Mani Bhawan (Gandhi memorial) / Evening flight to Kolkata (Calcutta)

Travel to the Gateway of India - the landmark of Bombay, which, was before the advent of air travel, the only gateway to India. It was built to commemorate the visit of King George and Queen Mary to India in 1911. Drive along Marine Drive, the sea - Front Boulevard. It is also known as the Queen’s Necklace as in the evening, the breeze from the Arabian Sea comes over Marine Drive and as the streetlights on this U-shaped road light up, the view from south Bombay’s skyscrapers or from the exclusive residential area, is that of a Queen’s Necklace. The Parsi Tower of Silence is where Zoroastrians enact their ancient, sacred rites for the dead. The coexistence of these religions (and many others) in such close proximity for centuries is a testament to the diversity and tolerance that characterizes this fascinating metropolis. End the day with a visit to Mani Bhawan - a hallowed memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, to his stay, and the activities he initiated from here. Continue to the airport for an evening flight to Kolkata (Luggage allowance on this flight is 33 lbs. for checked baggage and 15 lbs. for carry-ons).

Feb. 28 – Kolkata – Tour of City / Victoria Memorial / Howrah Bridge / St. Paul’s Cathedral (Kolkata)

Visit St. Paul's Cathedral. It is the first Episcopal Church of Asia featuring awesome Indo-Gothic architecture. The church was destroyed due to the earthquake of 1897, but has since been renovated. The beautiful pictures describe the life and works of Saint Paul. Visit the beautiful Victoria Memorial; a huge white-marble structure and an enduring monument of the British Raj in India. You will see the temple of Kali - the demonic attribute of Parvathi at Kalighat, and drive past the imposing Fort William. Stop by the Howrah Bridge; a miracle of engineering skill, it is a huge cantilever bridge supported by two piers 270 ft. high from the road level.

March 1 – Day devoted to visit and volunteering with the Missionaries of Charity

Spend the day at the Missionaries of Charity - a Roman Catholic Latin Rite religious congregation established in 1950 by Mother Teresa. Start the morning with a Mass at motherhouse, followed by a simple breakfast of bananas, bread and chai. If you wish, you can volunteer here. Volunteering with the Missionaries of Charity can be a very humbling experience. You can participate in one of many activities at this center from serving food to helping/feeding the old and physically challenged... there are many activities which can be a meaningful experience. Mother’s Tomb is also a very special place to offer prayers and find moments of solitude.

March 2 – Begin return flights home, or continue on the Golden Triangle extension.

Golden Triangle Extension $898.00*

March 2  Fly to Jaipur / Chokhi Dhani Village
March 3  Amer Fort / Elephant Ride / Jantar Mantar / Hawa Mahal / Jaipur city tour
March 4  Fatehpur Sikri / Agra / Akbar’s Church
March 5  Taj Mahal / Agra Fort / Travel to Dehli
March 6  Old Dehli Tour and Rickshaw Ride / Cathedral of the Sacred Heart / Presidential Palace / Humayun’s Tomb
March 7  Begin return flights
March 8  Return to USA

(Luggage allowance on this flight is 33 lbs. for checked baggage and 15 lbs. for carry-ons)

*All prices reflect a 4% cash discount