 

### To allow for an experience cultivating networks and practices across cultures which provides for active working and fostering communication between Australian and Indian experiences relating to natural building techniques.

The program is structured to take place in the last 3 weeks in February across southern India.

Arriving in Kochin, Kerala and travelling through to Tamil Nadu the program provides participants access to three community projects in the process of developing education programs relating to natural building, permaculture, eco-villages and community development projects.

Starting in a small remote highlands farm in Kodaikanal which has developed a program of natural living, building, farming and health activities in a mountain climate and finishing with a community based building company working with locals to re-enliven natural building practices. Staying for 5 days in the middle in Auroville with established projects and a diverse range of community initiatives.

Participants will be travelling and living in each community for 5-8 days and actively participating in the projects at different stages of development whilst experiencing the history and lifestyle of a range of communities in India, engaging with locals and learning about the processes, history and visions of these communities.

The aim of the program is to expose participants to a range of new skills and ingenuity in using natural and recycled materials for building homes and communities, developing relationships with organisations in India for future learning collaborations and providing participants with a wider range of building skills in a different climate and social conditions.

**To provide participants with an embedded cultural experience visiting a number of grass-roots centers, farms and communities in the process of developing or have successfully established natural building programs and sustainable living outcomes for minimising carbon-heavy building envelopes and the necessity for grid dependence.**

**Sustainable Building Tour –**

**Southern India – February 7-29 2016**

**Itinerary and Background Information**

Itinerary

[Street Address], [City], [State][Postal Code]

**Wednesday February 9- 17 Karuna Farm Workshop** (Day off Saturday 14th)

Karuna Farm is an intentional community in the mountains of South western Tamil Nadu, outside Kodaikanal. Members have come together and built a self-sufficient community practicing alternative building and permaculture ideas, utilising solar and water for energy and invite others to come and learn and share in their alternative vision andlifestyle.

“At Karuna Farm we harmonise with nature taking care of our body mind and spirit . We have chosen an alternative lifestyle and made it work. At Karuna we don't use electricity from the national grid. All power is sourced from solar energy and hydroelectric power.

Karuna is surrounded by forests and peaks on either side, with paths for a short forest stroll or an all day trek, with spectacular views, tropical forest and wildlife.

The project planned for Karuna farm is participating in an ongoing project for one of its newer members. Skills obtained will be working with stone, tyres, cob, bottles, and other local materials to create a new home for one of the members. Opportunities for yoga, permaculture gardening and learning about a fully functioning Earthship on site are available. Authentic Indian food is prepared using produce from the gardens.

Accommodation will be provided in a range of huts around the property with basic blankets provided, showers and tea/coffee preparation available. Toilets are outside pit toilets and the terrain is hilly, so prepare for a lot of walking.

**Sunday February 7 – Day** 1

12pm Meet in Kochi, Kerala (Hotel to be Arranged)

Afternoon Tour

5pm Meet and Induction

Dinner

**Monday February 8 – Day 2**

Private charter bus departing 730am for Kodai Kanal (311kms, 6-7hrs)

Lunch and Breaks

Arrive Kodai Kanal afternoon

Explore town – Meet for Dinner

**Tuesday February 9 – Day 3**

Morning Jeep to Karuna Farm

Arrive Lunch

Induction and workshop Theory class,

Tour of Farm

# Itinerary

**Thursday February 18 – Day 12 Leave Karuna – Go to Maduai (115km, 2hrs45m)**

Arrive Madurai hotel mid afternoon – Explore city and its magnificent famous Temple complex.

**Friday February 19 – Day 13 – Head to Auroville**

**(367km, 5-6hrs)**

Leave 730am – Lunch and Coffee breaks

Check in to International House

Sadhana Forest Tour 4pm (optional)

**Saturday February 20 – Day 14- Day Off**

Free to explore Auroville, Pondicherry and surrounding areas

Introduction and background to Auroville talk evening

**Sunday February 21 – Day 15**

Farm Tours

Sapney/Buddha Farm

Looking at re-vegetation, clever water use and organic gardening

**Monday February 22 – Day 16**

Sacred Groves

Helping build 180 eco-homes with an established group – natural building tour included

**Tuesday February 23 – Day 17**

Auroville Community, Solar Kitchen, Earth Building Institute

**Wednesday February 24 – Day 18**

Bamboo School seminar and tour of local businesses inc spirulina/kombucha

**Thursday February 25 – Day 19**

Morning packing/last minute shopping

Travel to Thiruvanmalai (130km – 3hrs)

Accommodation will be at the International House within Auroville community, a living space built with sustainable and environmental architectural ideals.

The building is designed for 12 individuals with a common kitchen and compost toilets. A large vault provides a double roof for heat protection and rain water catchment. The walls are rammed earth and compressed earth blocks. Solar power is used and the grey water biological treatment system feeds the garden.

Cooking options on site are available and/or meals will be taken around the tour program. Other restaurants, garden kitchens and food options are readily available nearby. Bicycles and motorbikes can be rented here to enable easy visits around the large community.

(Stay in Auroville community for 7 days, 6 nights) Accommodation, food and transport to tours and worksites is included during the stay. Any other exploration, bike rental, or alcohol is not included.

### Conditions to Expect:

Southern India, specifically Tamil Nadu the state we will be travelling into mostly has a population of 67 million inhabitants with 44% of the population of Tamils living in urban areas. Landing in Kochin with it’s large and close packed population, air and ground pollution and the early February heat may be confrontational for those who haven’t experienced India at its fundamental chaotic level. We will be meeting at a hotel, having an evening orientation and dinner and departing early the following morning for the first of 3 rural experiences.

As we will have a chartered bus with air-conditioning and the freedom to stop as needed along the 4 long drives

Mornings will generally begin at around 7:30am, with the days filled with outside working activities, building and gardening, cultural experiences, talks, tours and engagements with local groups and projects. Evenings are free from 5pm, depending on the day’s schedule. Some evening cultural events will be organised but otherwise the participants are free to head into town (Auroville only as that is the only location we will be staying near a ‘town’).

All 3 daily meals will be supplied, and will mostly be locally made southern Indian, which is primarily rice/chickpea based staples, curry, vegetables, fried foods, fish, some flat breads and sweet sweet tea. The traditional way of eating a meal involves being seated on the floor, having the food served on a [banana leaf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banana_leaf), and using clean fingers of the right hand to transfer the food to the mouth. After the meal, the fingers are washed, and the banana leaf becomes food for cows. A typical Tamilian would eat Idly/Dosai/uthappam etc. for breakfast and rice accompanied by lentil preparations Sambar, Rasam and curd for lunch. Meals will mostly be vegetarian based but we can organise for some meat meals over the program based on demand.

The weather conditions in Tamil Nadu in March will be fairly hot and dry as it is the end of winter and the build up to Monsoon in June. Daytime temperatures will be in the early 30s (degC) on the plains and the evening will drop to the early 20s. The sun can be quite strong so good sun protection is advised. In the third week we will be travelling up into the Southern Indian Alp mountains to KodaiKanal, which is a temperate lush forest environment where the temperature will be cooler and possibly wet also. Advised to bring one waterproof jacket for the trip.

### Sleeping Arrangements:

As we will be staying in 3 separate communities the sleeping conditions will change from place to place. In Hosur, the first stop we will be doing a home-stay in the local village nearest **S. Thattanapalli Village Farms and will be divided into small groups depending on facilities in the local town. This experience will provide an authentic village exchange, eating and living with local families and engaging with their lives, as well as working to build a local farm.**

Separate shared room accommodation will be provided at the International House in Auroville for the duration of our stay with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities with meals provided on site or around the larger Auroville community. The third accommodation at Karuna farm will be in two large houses way up in a remote part of the hills, nearby to the site we will be helping to construct an Earthship style dwelling. Meals will be provided at the Karuna central kitchen, an outdoor bathroom and shower provided and the walks between each site is through jungle paths. Couples wanting to share will be accommodated in each case.

A good level of fitness and agility and an adaptable open mind is necessary for any tour of India. The accommodation is mostly minimal, some bedding provided, with squat toilets, bucket showers and questionable hot water provision at times. This is the reality of life in a country like India.

### Health Advice:

As noted by most travellers who experience South Asia for the first time, the notable change in diet will ensure changes in digestive function. A certain level of diarrhoea is to be expected. Washing hands and eating only freshly cooked foods will ensure a certain level of bacterial safety. For those who have travelled to South Asia before, a preventative treatment of pro-biotics and carrying rehydration sachets is still advisable. Bringing a broad-spectrum anti-biotic course is also advisable. Drinking bottled water is essential. Personal experience has taught to bring a bottle of Grape Seed Extract, which if taken daily should prevent serious bacterial illness in the stomach. Other natural remedies such as charcoal tablets, oregano oil, and turmeric can work as anti-bacterial agents. Do your own research and talk to others about what they’ve done when visiting India before. It’s definitely no fun to get digestive problems in India but is also to be expected and often unavoidable.

### Cultural Note:

India is predominantly a traditional culture, particularly in rural areas. White folks are a common sight but are often scrutinised and found attractive and there are things travellers can do to avoid undue attention and avoid conflict. Drinking is widespread in Tamil Nadu but inherently socially and culturally problematic. Going out to bars is an option but staying in with some beers is preferable. Dressing sympathetically to Indian dress is also advised. For women to have their arms, chest and legs mostly covered with loose fitting clothes will save you issues in the long run. For men, a loose shirt and pants/shorts is fine. Engaging with Indian women is also problematic, be sensitive to your position and behaviour and if in doubt, ask. Southern Indians are incredibly genial, generous, light hearted and sunny, being a coastal culture of Dravidian roots. There are a lot of cultural and traditional rules, which are important to at least be sensitive to, if not fully understand.

Friday February 26-29 – Work with Thannal Earth Homes on a wattle and daub project at a local organic farm

Thannal means ***Shade***

‘**Thannal Hand Sculpted Homes**‘ is a Natural Building Awareness group based in Tiruvannamalai, India. Founded by Natural Builder & Architect Biju Bhaskar with his wife Sindhu Bhaskar in 2011.

Monday 29th February – Leave for Chennai – Arrive afternoon. Alternative transport can be organized by the participant is needing to get to Chennai earlier.

Accommodation will be based out of a local organic farmstay which has a range of natural building huts and communal buildings for guests to enjoy.

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The weather conditions in Tamil Nadu in February will be fairly hot and dry as it is the end of winter and the build up to Monsoon in June. Kochin will be more humid. Daytime temperatures will be in the early 30s (degC) on the plains and the evening will drop to the early 20s. The sun can be quite strong so good sun protection is advised. In the first week we will be travelling up into the Southern Indian Alp mountains to KodaiKanal, which is a temperate lush forest environment where the temperature will be cooler and possibly wet also. Advised to bring one waterproof jacket for the trip.

### Sleeping Arrangements:

As we will be staying in 3 separate communities the sleeping conditions will change from place to place. Separate shared room accommodation will be provided at the International House in Auroville for the duration of our stay with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities with meals provided on site or around the larger Auroville community. Separate accommodation will be possible for couples at some location but not assured. Accommodation at Karuna and Thannal will be more rustic but a thin mattress will be available. Camping options are always available if preferred.

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Drinking is widespread in Tamil Nadu but inherently socially and culturally problematic. **Going out to bars is an option but staying in with some beers is preferable and not always accessible so please understand that drinking opportunities may be limited**!

Dressing sympathetically to Indian dress is also advised. For women to have their arms, chest and legs mostly covered with loose fitting clothes will save you issues in the long run. For men, a loose shirt and pants/shorts is fine. Engaging with Indian women is also problematic, be sensitive to your position and behaviour and if in doubt, ask. Southern Indians are incredibly genial, generous, light hearted and sunny, being a coastal culture of Dravidian roots. There are a lot of cultural and traditional rules, which are important to at least be sensitive to, if not fully understand.

### Travel Requirements:

**Passport**

Make sure you have a current passport (it needs to be valid for 6 months AFTER your return date), if you do not have a passport apply for one as soon as possible. It should only take 10 days to process, but it can take longer. Passport application forms are available at the Post Office.

**Visas**

It is essential that before you depart you ensure you have obtained the correct visa or entry documents. Information and the process for obtaining an Indian tourist visa can be found at <http://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/> but it is the responsibility of each participant to apply and pay for their own visa. Note the process can ONLY be done online now across Australia.

Dealing with the online visa process can be tricky and takes time so please leave yourself at least 4 weeks to order, pay and pick up the visa before departure. If you intend to travel before or after the program to other countries make sure that you have the required visas for your intended destinations.

**Insurance**

Fully comprehensive travel insurance is a compulsory component of the Program, particularly as we will be working and living in developing communities and the conditions for working are not equivalent with working conditions in Australia. Comprehensive travel insurance for India for 3 weeks is not too expensive and would definitely be worth it should the need arise. Check online rates for some good deals.

### Health and Safety:

The health and safety of people involved in any ForageTour program is paramount. No organisation, can guarantee the health and safety of every individual in a program abroad but ForageTours can ensure that guidelines are in place to promote preparedness and minimise risk. A full liability release will be signed by the participant before arriving in India. There are extra site specific and activity related risks that will be apparent once at the sites and site specific safety talks will be in place before working on any particular tasks. Most importantly; participants are encouraged not to participate in any activity that they feel is beyond their capabilities or might cause undue stress to the body. Any safety concerns should also be raised with the EA guides at any particular site. Participants are encouraged to check their equipment and if in doubt, ask!!

However there are a range of aspects that are beyond the guide’s control such as the day to day behaviour of participants, the actions of people who are not part of the program and the transferability of home country cultural values and norms.

Before you go

When making a judgment on whether or not to attend this program, take your personal health issues into account and ensure that the Forage Guides have an updated history of your physical and mental health and any other personal data that may be crucial to a safe and healthy education abroad experience.

Keep in mind that you will be living in a quite different environment from that which you are used to at home and it may present unfamiliar health and safety risks. Take a common sense approach, be aware of the risks and behave sensibly.

### Application process:

Fill out the supplied application form, read and sign the declaration and scan and send the form to [earthshipsaus@gmail.com](mailto:earthshipsaus@gmail.com) or send to Earthship Australia

32 Hope St, Preston Victoria 3072 and an email will be sent to you with confirmation of your place on the tour.

### Payment Details:

After acceptance to the tour, a non-refundable deposit of $200 is required by the 31st of October to secure your place. The direct deposit can be made into our account. Full payment is required by the 25th of January 2015 and can include partial payments. Full payment of $1625 will be required at this point. Contact [earthshipsaus@gmail.com](mailto:earthshipsaus@gmail.com) if there are special considerations for payment.

### Application process:

To join the tour, ask for an application form, read and sign the declaration and scan and send the form to [foragetours@gmail.com](mailto:foragetours@gmail.com) and an email will be sent to you with confirmation of your place on the tour.

### Payment Details:

After acceptance to the tour, a non-refundable deposit of $200 is required by the 31st of December to secure your place. The direct deposit can be made into our account. Full payment is required by the 25th of January 2015 and can include partial payments. Full payment of $1665 will be required at this point. Contact [foragetours@gmail.com](mailto:earthshipsaus@gmail.com) if there are special considerations for payment.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | Meet Kochi – induction, afternoon tour day free/dinner |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| Leave for Kodai  Stay in Kodai one night | Get to Karuna | Workshop day 1 | Workshop day 2 | Workshop day 3 | Day off | Workshop day 4 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| Workshop day 5 | Workshop day 6 | Workshop day 7 | Leave Kodai get to Madurai | Drive Madurai to Auroville Sadhana tour | Day Off | Auroville day 1  Farm tours/sapney Buddha |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| Auroville day 2  Sacred Groves | Auroville day 3  Solar kitchen, EBAA, matrimandir | Auroville day 4  Bamboo/other tours | Auroville day 5  Leave for Thiru | Thannal day 1 | Thannal day 2 | Thannal day 3 |
| 29 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Leave for Chennai in afternoon |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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**Schedule –**

**February 7-29**