



South India – a Journey in the Spirit of Dance 28 Dec 2023 – around 18 Jan 2024

Would you to experience South India up close? Do you want to dance, find rest and discover new aspects of yourself?

Would you like to experience both chaos and unexpected order, beauty and harsh realities, dance and stillness and hard beds, wonderful food, many curious questions, mountains of carrots to peel, amazing nature and endless expanses of countryside, some days of city life, mosquitoes (not malaria), poverty, bright colours, great contrasts and endless expanses, warmth, a lot of hope and joy? Do you want to fall in love?

We travel to Shantivanam Ashram with a few stops along the way, from Chennai via Mamallapuram, Pondyerry and Thanjavur. In Chennai and along the way, we shall be dancing as well as encountering and experiencing others dancing, at a dance festival, at the temple of the dancing god Shiva and much more. This before retreating to our own eight to ten days of dancing, rest, silence, hikes, excursions and conversations.

Shantivanam Ashram was founded by two Benedictine monks in the early 1900s. Later, the British monk Bede Griffith was sent there. He recreated the ashram to be a meeting place for many traditions of wisdom and with a great openness to thoughts of other religions. It is still a welcoming place where everyone can participate as much or as little as desired in the daily routines. The services use texts from many “wisdom traditions”. They are basically Christian but also include traits from Hindu practices such as puja and mantras.

Here we shall be invited to have our own dance workshop and we will be able to walk along the sacred river Kaveri, visit the small villages nearby and experience Indian countryside up close. We will also make some minibus excursions, one to visit the Intact Special School for Mentally Challenged Children in the nearby large city of Tiruchirapalli and another to visit the huge Vishnu temple of Srirangam.

We will start our journey in Chennai (Madras) and bid goodbye in Tiruchirapalli, all in TamilNadu, the southernmost and also one of the largest Indian states, the poorest and most traditional. Here most people still use traditional clothes, the tourists are mainly from other parts of India and crime rate is low. We will be met by curious, cheerful, beautiful and friendly people.

The climate in January is like a really good northern European summer. It is quite gentle, at times hot but not really stifling and the shade and the breeze create a nice and comfortable ambiance.

We spend about 18-24 days together, partly on the road but also with eight to ten days at Shantivanam Ashram in the countryside. Here we have our base and our workshop where we explore our own dance traditions and how they might reflect on the Indian dance and on our own individual Indian experiences. (NB it is not a course in Indian dance) We participate in the activities of the Ashram according to our own separate wishes as well as enjoy nature and the villages nearby.

The preliminary program looks like this (India being the way it is means that nothing can be really certain until it has actually taken place)

We will meet on Thursday, December 28, 2023, at YWCA in Chennai. It's possible to get there in all sorts of ways. We will give suggestions for good travel options. Generally, one can expect to fly from Europe on December 27 and arrive in Chennai the next day. Direct flights are rare and one change of flights is usually required. Cheaper options with several changes can be found.. Maybe you would like to go earlier and celebrate Christmas somewhere in India, maybe you would prefer to stay on afterwards. The options are many and we will help you with advice and ideas. We, the course leaders, will announce our flights to make you are able to share our company at least part of the way if you wish (at least if you fly from Europe).

In TamilNadu the group will travel by train/hired minibuses and stay in hotels of quite different standards. Officially, we shall end our joint trip approximately (depending a bit on how the bookings of our stays will turn out, the number of participants, confirmations are yet to be finalised) on January 20th in Tiruchirapalli. Here you can get a domestic flight or train or taxi/minibus back to Chennai and your flight home and we will help you book. It is possible to leave for home earlier if necessary, or maybe you would rather stay and travel on in India on your own? We will help you with advice and practical ideas.





**Your dance and travel guides
are Pia Lamberth and Sabine Neumann**

Both live in Sweden, Pia is Swedish, Sabine German. Teaching will be in English, Swedish and German, depending on the needs of the group.

Pia has made eight dance trips to TamilNadu in the past, including seven as a leader and organiser. She has been working with dance for thirty years, with dances from many times and cultures, leading dance groups, training dance leaders and working with Circle dance in all kinds of ways as both choreographer and teacher. At the heart of it is the legacy of patterns and stories that generations of dancers have carried to us through millennia.

Sabine is a dance leader, meditation leader and experienced tour guide. She has been in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere in India a number of times to travel, dance, meditate, hike and she has been a co-organizer and leader on previous dance trips with Pia.

Practical;

You book and pay for your flight and your travel insurance yourself. We can make recommendations and help you. In India, you pay for your own accommodation, food and admissions.

(Prices for overnight stays and food are very low. In January 2023 1 rupie is 0,11 euro. At the Ashram you pay as a donation 1000 rupies / day or more if you wish, including food. The most expensive hotel will probably cost perhaps 3000 rupies incl. breakfast.)

The course price is SEK 6500, of which the registration fee is SEK 1000. The maximum number of participants is 14.

The course price includes

- + booking of all accommodations
- + joint trips during our group journey
- + all joint tips
- + guiding and teaching with a focus on you being able to continue traveling on your own in India after our joint trip
- + about 8-10 days dance workshop (related to our trip but not necessarily Indian dances) with material, as well as dancing on occasion throughout the trip
- + Preparatory meetings on Zoom during autumn 2023
- + Advice and help with your own bookings of flights and further travel in India

A return trip Copenhagen -Chennai costs (Jan 2023) about SEK 7 - 8000 and up, it is probably cheaper from major hubs in Europe and elsewhere.. There are many cheaper but more cumbersome alternatives. For everyone, the sooner you book, the cheaper it will be. In March-April, tickets are usually released for December-January. A visa is needed for India and you will get help with the application. E-visa seems to be the norm and you need to check with the Indian Embassy in your country how it's done there. The passport must be valid for at least 6 months from the date of the visa.

Some vaccinations will be needed, the cost will depend on what protections you already have – and which ones you want – you'll have to check prices and such where you live. We require that you have been vaccinated against cholera/traveller's diarrhea (a drinking vaccine that you take the week before departure).

Note that our group will be both English-, Swedish- and perhaps even German-speaking. The material will be available in those languages as well.

To sign up

e-mail pia@pialamberth.se and deposit the registration fee of SEK 1000 to confirm your registration. PayPal @pialamberth. If you need a bank account instead, let us know. The remaining amount of SEK 5500 has to be paid no later than November 2023.

Cancellations will only be accepted until the last day of registration which is June 30, 2023, unless someone can take your place. You might want to get a holiday insurance to help you if you need to cancel. We ourselves are responsible for the entire economic gamble and have no margins.

As soon as you sign up, you will receive ongoing information on the progress of plans.

