

Exclusive Tour of the Music, Dance and Spiritual Worlds of Rajasthan, India 2016

With **Yuval Ron & Sajida Ben-Tzur**

Take a journey full of rare musical encounters, exquisite dancing, sacred Sufi shrines, stunning landscapes, temples, desert tribal parties and the festive celebrations of Rajasthan



14 glorious days - February 14-27, 2016

The sights of India's impressive landscapes are the glorious backdrop for a special excursion that enables an intimate, unique introduction to India through its tribal musical culture and the special inhabitants of the Rajasthan desert.

Rajasthan (Raj – royal, sthan – land/state) is one of the most colorful states in India. It is a desert region abounding in classical and ancient traditions, where palaces, temples, fortresses and royalty exist alongside villages and tribes.

Music in India, and especially in Rajasthan, is a principal part of religious rituals setting the tone for holidays and wedding ceremonies. This music, played for kings when they went off to battle, accompanies the Sufi festivities and provides entertainment for the high society. Bringing the

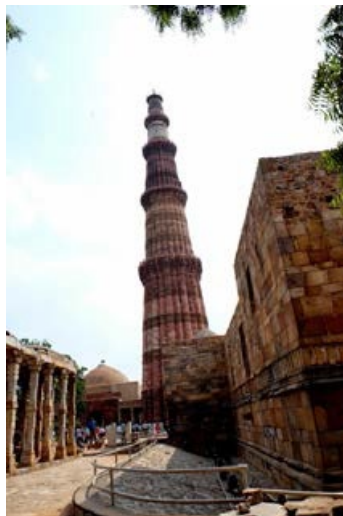
various religions and classes together, the music of Rajasthan opens a door to the fascinating cultural worlds that are the focus and inspiration for this special journey.

Sajida Ben-Tzur, our tour guide, is a dancer of Kathak classical Indian and the Rajasthani folk dance traditions, an Indian Chef and the daughter of a Sufi Sheikh from Rajasthan. Sajida (pronounced SAJ-DA) has met and worked with many of the most exceptional musicians in this region. This tour facilitates a personal connection with Rajasthan's landscapes and people through the ears, the eyes and especially the heart!

Feb 14-15, 2016 - Day 1-2: Flight to India

Depart on a flight of your choice to Delhi, India. If you fly from North America, you will arrive in India in the late night of Feb 15 or early morning of Feb 16.

Feb 16, 2016 - Day 3: Delhi



Arrive in Delhi airport. At the airport, meet our tour guide Sajida and her staff. Private bus transfer to the hotel in the early morning of Feb 16. Rest and refresh then enjoy breakfast at the hotel. In the afternoon, the fun truly begins with a **musical orientation meeting lead by Yuval Ron and Sajida**, followed by an honor and a privilege: A **pilgrimage visit** to the **Dargah** (a burial place shrine where musicians play and followers visit) of **Hazrat Inayat Khan** – the influential master musician and master Sufi teacher who introduced India's Sufi Chisti teachings to the West. Hear an exclusive presentation by Yuval Ron on **the life and teaching of Hazrat Inayat Khan** and Yuval's relationship and collaborations with Pir Zia Inayat Khan – the current leader of the Sufi Order International, the grandson of Hazrat Inayat Khan, and “one of the most important young spiritual

leaders in the world today” according to USC Dean of Religious Life, Dr. Varun Soni. Dinner and over night at the hotel.

Feb 17, 2016: Day 4 – Classic Udaipur



In the morning, we are off on a domestic flight to **Udaipur**, the city whose landscape and palaces have been compared to the legends of the *Arabian Nights*. From the airport in Udaipur we ride our private tour bus to hotel to have lunch. After lunch we will explore the romantic city and have **an exclusive meeting with a local Bansuri master**. (Bansuri is an Indian bamboo flute). The master-musician will share with us his insights into **the art of classical meditative, contemplative Indian music and the healing power of the ragas** (musical modes used in India for thousands of years for well-being and harmonious existence with nature). Enjoy an exclusive presentation of Yuval Ron on his work in the field of **sound healing** (see www.mettamindfulnessmusic.com) and hear a behind the scene report about his up-coming 4 Cd’s Set box based on **Ayurvedic medicine** (traditional Indian medicine). Witness **a rare jam session with Yuval Ron on the Oud (Mid Eastern Lute) with the local Bansuri flute master musician**.

Dinner and over night at the hotel.

Feb 18, 2016: Day 5 – Udaipur’s palace lake

Blessed with lakes Udaipur is known as the **“Venice of the East.”** Tour the picturesque city and take a pleasurable **cruise boat ride on Lake Pichola**. After we shall visit one of the wonders of India: the impressively beautiful and rich **Maharaja Palace** and Museum – the **City Palace**. In the early evening enjoy **a musical encounter** with some of the **local musicians of Udaipur**.

Dinner and over night at the hotel.

Feb 19, 2016: Day 6 - The 'Terah Taali' dance and Jain Temple of Ranakpur



After breakfast, travel to Ranakpur on our private tour bus. On the way, stop at a small village for a **stimulating exclusive visit to the home of a Khamer tribal family**. We will meet with a **group of traditional Terah Taali dancers, drummers and musicians** where we will enjoy an informal presentation about their **heritage and unique tribal culture**. Followed by a visit to the **local village temple** where we will see the dancers perform **an amazing sacred dance ritual**.

Terah Taali dancers tie bells to their arms and legs when they perform this Rajasthan folk dance. This dance is unique to the Khamer tribe in Rajasthan and is danced to the accompaniment of drums and celebratory songs in honor of the god **Baba Ramdevji**.

In the afternoon we shall visit the **Marble Temple of Ranakpur** with its hand-carved sculptured columns. This amazing place is the **pilgrimage center for the Jain religious group**, known mainly for their devout, strictly vegetarian way of life.

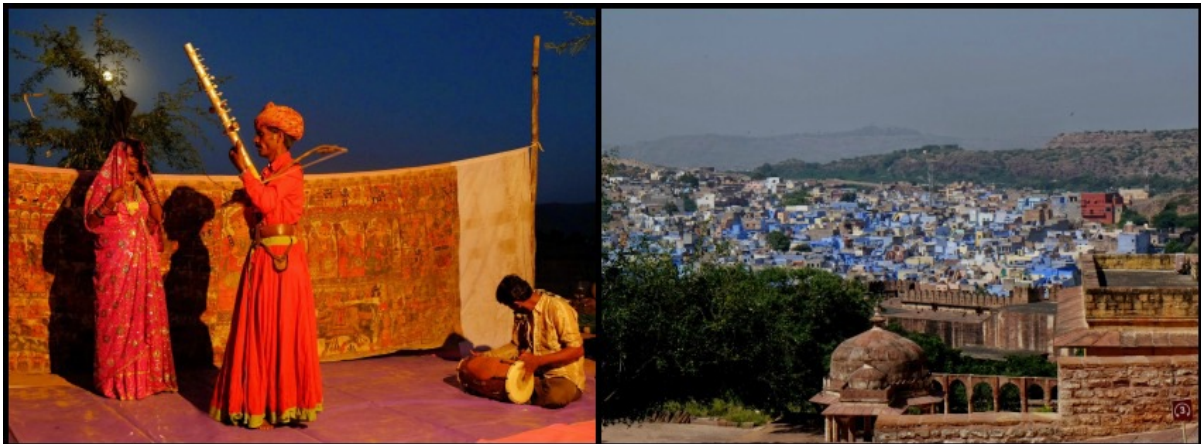


Continue the journey to Jodhpur. Check in into the hotel for a restful evening.

Dinner and over night at the hotel.

Feb 20, 2016: Day 7 - Jaisalmer - The cradle of Flamenco!

After a leisurely breakfast and hotel check out, we drive to the wondrous desert city of **Jaisalmer**. The city surrounded by sand looks as if it sprang up from a fairytale. In the past, Jaisalmer was a central caravan stop on the **Perfume Road** connecting India with the Middle East and Europe.



After lunch we will tour the **Kalakar colony's (artist neighborhood)** alleyways located outside the city's walls and enjoy **an exclusive and fascinating intimate musical meeting with a master musician from the Manganiyer tribe**. Members of the Manganiyer tribe are the court musicians of

the Kingdom of Rajasthan. They are known for their exceptional musical style, instruments and culture. Some claim that Rajasthan is the source of Flamenco music. When listening to the Manganiyer songs and instruments one can clearly discern the similarities and themes that connect the two worlds. Enjoy **an exclusive dueling jam session with the local musician and Yuval Ron** playing his Oud, the predecessor of the Flamenco guitar, and **a presentation by Yuval on the history of Flamenco and its relation to the music and dance of Rajasthan**. While at this important artist's colony of Jaisalmer, we will meet many **Manganiyer** musicians and their children. We will **have the privilege of observing how these children are learning the secrets of the tribe's unique music and dance styles**, and how the ancient tradition is passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation within the family framework of the Manganiyer community. Rajasthan is also known for its unique puppet theaters. We'll **meet with the creators of traditional Rajasthani puppets** and **experience the ancient art of the Rajasthani puppet theater** accompanied by local musicians.

Dinner and over night at the hotel.

Feb 21, 2016: Day 8 -Tribal Feast on the Dunes

In the morning, will explore Jaisalmer's old neighborhoods and enjoy a delightful musical performance of the Manganiyer tribe children, age 5 to 15 years old, who carry forth the fascinating virtuosic music that is the foundation for the various gypsy musical styles worldwide. Followed by lunch at the hotel and a restful early afternoon. In the late afternoon travel one hour to the **Thar Desert** for an **unforgettable magical evening on the dunes**, including an **optional camel ride** and a **tribal dinner party feast, to the sounds of the desert Manganiyer tribe musicians**.



Feb 22, 2016: Day 9 - Stories of the Gods in Jodhpur.

After breakfast, we leave Jaisalmer in our private tour bus to go to **Jodhpur, the Blue City.**

On the outskirts of the city we will meet a couple of **'Bhopa Bhopi' storytellers**, who belong to the desert nomad culture. Wandering from place to place, the Bhopa Bhopi are the keepers of an **ancient cloth scroll called the Phad.** The stories of the Rajasthan epoch **Pabuji** is painted on the Phad. The storytellers spread out the Phad in each city they pass through and for several nights it takes on the life of a temple. The Bhopies tell the mystic story in song, accompanied by ancient string instruments. Our journey will take us next to the architectural wonder of **Jodhpur Fort**, overlooking a spectacular view of the city. Although India nationalized many properties of the Rajasthan Royalty after Independence, the Jodhpur Fort still belongs to the Maharaja of Jodhpur and is a living testimony to the culture of the Rajputs military and aristocracy.

In the afternoon we will meet some nomads from the **Sapera tribe** in the desert area surrounding the city of Jodhpur. Traditionally the Sapera are expert **snake catchers.** They also have a unique folkloristic musical style and perform the **nomadic Rajasthani dances called Kalbelia.** We will spend **exclusive time with these nomadic musicians** in this rural folk atmosphere, and watch an **acrobatic wild dance performance.**

Dinner and over night at the hotel.

Feb 23, 2016: Day 10 – Pushkar to the rhythm of the drum



In the morning we continue our journey to **Pushkar**. A small city with a sacred lake at its center, Pushkar is one of the most important focal points for Hindu pilgrimages. Surrounding the lake are hundreds of temples with the most colorful markets in Rajasthan between them.

We will become acquainted with the area and by sunset, on the edge of the lake, we will meet **Nathu Lal**, a local musician that plays a drum called a “nagara”. Nathu will tell us about the nagara culture and the **folk rhythms in Rajasthan**. We will have our own hands-on experience in a **rhythm workshop**, and will listen to the Nathu’s glorious drum performance.

Dinner and over night at the hotel

Feb 24, 2016: Day 11 – The Sufi sacred city of Ajmer:



After breakfast we will visit the **Temple of the God Brahma**. Hindu gods have many temples, but Brahma has only one and that is in the city of Pushkar. There will be free time around the colorful **Bazaar open market** to discover and shop for **traditional Indian goods**.

After lunch at the hotel, we will drive to the nearby city of Ajmer, the most sacred city to the Sufis (Muslim mystics) in Southeast Asia. We will have the great honor and the privilege to visit the **Dargah** (the grave) of the righteous Sufi, **Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishty**, who brought Sufism to Southeast Asia. Sufi saints graves are both a center for ritual and pilgrimage. We shall go through the alleyways of the old city until we reach the Sufi “**khanqah**” for the **Gudri Shahi order**. The “khanqah” is a center in which members of the local Sufi order perform their spiritual work and is also the **house our tour guide Sajida was raised in!**

We will meet a group of **Qawwali musicians** in the khanqah for an **intimate exclusive conversation about their lives, their spiritual path, and their culture**. Then, they will perform a **private recital of traditional Qawwali Sufi devotional music**.

The sacred musical tradition called Qawwali came into existence during the last 800 years and has an important function in rituals and practices of the dominant Sufi order in India, the Chishty. The rhythmic, energetic music leads to a trance state and is sung to the poems of righteous Sufi poets like Rumi, Hafiz, Hazrat Amir Khusro and others.

Feb 25, 2016: Day 12 – Visit to Sajida’s home and Hindu debka music

After breakfast we shall visit a Sufi school on a hill overlooking the largest lake in Ajmer, ‘Aana Sagar’. There we will have the privilege of having **an exclusive meeting with the Sufi Sheikh Hazrat Inam Hasan Gudri Shah Baba the fifth**, the older brother of our tour guide Sajida.

The Sheikh founded the school with the objective of providing education for human brotherhood, to create bonds between various communities such as the Hindi, Muslims, and Sikhs, and to enable free education for children from lower income families. We will have the great privilege and honor of having **an exclusive private lunch at the home of Sajida’s parents** with an authentic traditional Indian meal cooked by Sajida’s mother, who is known for her cooking.

At dusk we return to Pushkar. We will stop at the Hotel for dinner, then go out to the heart of **one of the most Holy places in India** where we will meet **Hindi debka musicians**. We will hear **traditional love songs to the gods** and have **a night that is one grand celebration**.

Feb 26, 2016: Day 13 – The Kathak Dance and the classical music of Jaipur



After breakfast we will drive to **Jaipur**, the **Pink City** and Capital of Rajasthan.

We will visit the Jaipur Kathak **Kendra School for classical Indian dance**, for **an exclusive meeting with one of the teachers**. We will hear a description of the classical dance culture, the accompanying music, and watch students who practice their exercises diligently for years.

From the dance school we will continue to the **Hawa Mahal**, the **Palace of the Wind**, and then the **Old City**. Towards evening we shall attend a **special 'Arti' ceremony** that has been practiced for hundreds of years in the Temple honoring the **God Krishna**, in the heart of the old city.

At the end of the day we will enjoy our last festive farewell party with **a concert of Indian classical music by the local musicians, Yuval Ron and participants of the tour, plus a luscious dinner** at the hotel.

Feb 27, 2016: Day 14 - Elephant ride in Jaipur and Return to Delhi

The next day we will climb to the **Amar Fortress** on the backs of **decorated elephants** for a visit to this historic and powerful site. After lunch we ride our bus all the way to Delhi. Upon arrival in Delhi we will have dinner at the hotel, refresh, change and rest in public areas of the hotel and a few changing/wash rooms reserved for our group. After dinner we will ride in our bus to the airport to catch a night flight or early morning flight back home.

Note: Organizers reserve the right to make changes in Itinerary at anytime.