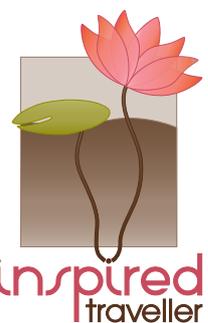


Singing the Sacred

in India's Auroville with
Kim Cunio & Heather Lee

5-15 JANUARY 2015





'Humanity is not the last rung of the terrestrial creation. Evolution continues and man will be surpassed. It is for each individual to know whether he wants to participate in the advent of this new species.

For those who are satisfied with the world as it is, Auroville obviously has no reason to exist.'

Mirra Alfassa ('The Mother'), Auroville's Co-Founder





Overview

Auroville is one of the great havens of India. Nestled close to Pondicherry of The Life of Pi fame Auroville was founded for as an international initiative to bring all of the world's people's together. This is a place for study, contemplation and artistic pursuit, the perfect place to sing and explore the transformative power of music. This small group singing retreat allows us to develop the voice at whatever level we are at in a holistic and deeply engaging manner. As a group we will understand and interpret music from the great traditions paying special homage to India where we are staying.

Mornings will be spent singing and studying sacred music in a highly supportive atmosphere with ample time for individual reflection on your work, while afternoons will allow free time to explore and be a part of Auroville itself. Two excursions will take in Auroville and Pondicherry while evenings will be a time for coming together with occasional 'moonlight' singing. Heather Lee will provide two vocal sessions for each participant to help transform the voice and provide a strong technical base for future singing. At retreat's end an informal concert will also take place providing a chance to engage with the local community.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Participating in eight highly focused music and singing workshops facilitated by sacred music specialist Dr Kim Cunio from the QLD Conservatorium of music, and sublime soprano Heather Lee.
- Learning the beautiful practice of meditative singing across the different traditions, including sacred song, prayer, mantra and kirtan.
- Two individual singing sessions with Heather Lee to expand vocal capabilities.
- Enjoying the company of other 'inspired travellers', led by highly experienced India enthusiasts who will make this an experience that is supported, hygienic and safe.
- Gentle yoga each day with Heather Lee, easily learned and joyfully practiced in a beautiful natural environment.
- Staying in the greenbelt of Auroville and close to Chennai, the gateway to South India.
- Savouring delicious local cuisine that can be served with or without spice.
- Attendance at a music event that is part of Auroville's cultural calendar.
- Moonlight singing.
- Day trips to Auroville and Pondicherry to learn about this remarkable city including visits to the Matra Mandir and Shri Aurobindo's grave.
- Access to local crafts and handicrafts, opportunity to visit and assist local aid projects.



Workshop Leaders

HEATHER LEE

Does **Heather Lee** possess Australia's purest voice? This is a question many listeners have asked after hearing her in concert or recording. Heather has sung at the Whitehouse and United Nations, the Sydney 2000 Olympics, been the recorded voice for major events including the Asian Games and Winter Olympics, as well as major cultural events such as the touring of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Khalili collection of Islamic Art and the Maharajah of Jodhpur's Sacred Art collection. With an ability to sing in many languages and styles, Heather (MCA Voice) has focused on both sacred traditional music and western classical music in her career. Heather has a longstanding commitment to singing the sacred, and has taken many listeners to the spiritual heights in her recordings and concerts. She has made a number of discs for the ABC including *The Sacred Fire*, music of Hildegard of Bingen *Sweet Dreams*, lullabies from around the world, and *Under Eastern Skies*.

KIM CUNIO

Dr Kim Cunio B. Mus, MCA Composition, is a composer, music historian, instrumentalist and singer who is equally at home in reconstructive, contemporary and classical music forms. Kim lectures at the QLD conservatorium in composition, world music and supervises students to Doctorate level as well as being active as a music scholar. His ability to research and compose music from a large number of cultures, coupled with his classically derived technique, gives him a distinctive sound and palette of instrumental and vocal textures to work with. He has been commissioned to write for chamber orchestras, brass, chamber music and vocal ensembles; for the concert arena, and in a variety of other contexts including festivals, installations, galleries, television and radio. Kim is published by the ABC Australia's National broadcaster and has been nominated for two AGSC awards for his television music. Kim has been awarded an ABC Golden Manuscript Award for his work with traditional and new music, and also works as a freelance producer.

SINGING WORKSHOPS

Dr Kim Cunio will facilitate eight sacred singing workshops. These will generally be held in the mornings and are suitable for singers at all levels of confidence and experience. Kim's primary aim is to support you to see singing as an increasing source of pleasure, particularly as part of a group that explores the effect of sacred music on the mind and body.

Kim and Heather will share the principles of singing that they written about and taught successfully for many years, particularly the notion of participant observation for singers and musicians, and how it can deepen our resonance with music and culture itself. Of great interest is an increased understanding of how music has kept culture alive, and acted as a bridge between people for millennia, through a study of seminal pieces of music.

In the first half of the retreat Kim will cover the musical cultures of the great traditions while we as a group learn key pieces from these cultures. Each day we will add to our repertoire and our understanding of the rich history of sacred music. In the second half of the retreat the focus shifts towards notions of blending, music making and ensemble, how do we as singers and music lovers bring out the beauty in sacred music and chant? What are the effects of repeating these sacred texts in music over time? This will culminate in a public sharing of our repertoire and musical insight, which will be professionally recorded and made available to each participant on return to Australia.

Kim and Heather will offer lively discussions and musical exercises each day that will greatly enhance your singing fluency, depth of observation, confidence in your own perspective, and joy in music. This will include writing new music on the great sacred texts. They will also encourage you to think freshly about your musical life, and how this can further intensify and stimulate, even change your own singing and music making. They will skilfully encourage each of you to support others within the group, no matter how diverse each participant's ambitions or hopes may be.

WHO WOULD ENJOY AND BENEFIT FROM THIS TOUR?

Travel is a key way to leave the familiar behind and explore new and refreshing experiences, both inwardly and externally. Traveling as a member of a small group offers you instant company and stimulation, especially when you are sharing an interest as authentic and uplifting as singing – and are doing so in a place as beautiful as Auroville.

To participate comfortably, you will need to enjoy moving around Auroville by local transportation and on foot to visit places of interest. While this tour is not strenuous, you must be fit enough to walk unhurriedly and stand for several hours most days without feeling exhausted. The sightseeing in the afternoons is optional but highly recommended. Additionally it is very nice to spend some time in Auroville, meeting the residents and guests. While in our singing workshop room we will have Western chairs, in some of the excursions you may need to sit on flat cushions or directly on the floor for a short period of time. You will also need to be able to carry your own luggage and we advise 'Zen packing' (a small suitcase!) for ease. You are free to bring laptops, journals or notebooks and additional reading and listening.

Travel in a group also requires a fair degree of emotional 'fitness' and sometimes the needs of the group must come before your individual timetable. For example, it is important to be confident that you can be prompt when that's required, listen respectfully to others and observe their needs, and keep up readily with the group when we are involved in shared activities. We also ask that you make a commitment to be present at all the singing workshops in order to give your support to others and to benefit from the unfolding of the teaching and experiences more generally.

Travel Itinerary

Included meals are indicated below as: **B** – breakfast, **D** – dinner.

MONDAY 5 JANUARY

Today most participants will travel from their home cities to Chennai International Airport in India. Please read the section on the suggested group flight and meeting point in Chennai for more details – see page 10. Group travel to and from India is NOT essential. We are expecting some participants will travel in other ways and meet up with the group in Chennai today.

On arrival we overnight at a hotel near Chennai airport.

TUESDAY 6 JANUARY

This morning all participants will meet at a designated hotel in Chennai. After hotel check-out, we will then travel to our hotel in the greenbelt of Auroville, our base for the next 9 nights. The easy journey by private shuttle bus will take approximately three hours depending on traffic.

On arrival at our hotel, after time to rest and refresh, we gather for our first workshop. This will set the ground for the coming days and will also include an orientation session about Auroville.

This evening we meet in the hotel lobby before taking a shuttle bus to a local restaurant for our welcome dinner. **(B, D)**

WEDNESDAY 7 – SATURDAY 10 JANUARY INCLUSIVE

Following breakfast, we meet for our morning singing workshop with Kim Cunio and Heather Lee. During our short mid-morning break, we will have moving meditation (Yoga) in a private corner of the hotel's peaceful grounds. Optional but highly recommended.

In the afternoons you can choose between exploring the city (with the group or on your own) or using your time to rest and reflect.

We will take those interested on a number of optional excursions to Auroville and Pondicherry including visits to the Matra Mandir and Shri Aurobindo's grave.

During the retreat, you will have two individual vocal sessions with Heather Lee who will help you to transform the voice and provide a strong technical base for future singing.

We will also attend a music event that is part of Auroville's cultural calendar as well as enjoy 'moonlight singing' on some evenings. **(B)**



SUNDAY 11 JANUARY

Today we will take a full day excursion to the Brihadeeswarar temple in Thanjavur, a UNESCO World Heritage site. An architectural marvel of ancient India it's dedicated to Shiva and is one of India's most beautiful sites. **(B)**

MONDAY 12 JANUARY

Following breakfast, as usual we meet for our morning writing workshop with Kim and Heather.

In the afternoon you can choose between exploring the city or using your time to rest or walk at your own pace close to the hotel. **(B)**

TUESDAY 13 JANUARY

Today is day at leisure for you to spend as you wish. **(B)**

WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY (B, D)

Following breakfast, we meet for our morning singing workshop. The rest of the day is yours to enjoy. There may be a site to visit once more or something new still to be discovered. You may like time to rest or sing. Tonight we will celebrate our singing and touring achievements with a farewell dinner at the hotel followed by our group performance with some local musicians. **(B, D)**

THURSDAY 15 JANUARY (B)

After breakfast we meet for our final workshop with Kim and Heather before concluding our retreat (12 noon). Please do not arrange to leave earlier as during the morning we will have a beautiful simple ceremony to mark the end of our time together.

We will travel to Chennai in the afternoon to connect with the 'group' flight home. For those staying on in Auroville, or traveling to other parts of India, we will give you information on how to travel to your next destination. **(B)**



Tour Costs

TOUR COSTS

\$1,480 per person (based on twin-share accommodation).
\$280 supplement for a room for single occupancy.

TOUR INCLUSIONS

The following arrangements **are** included in the tour cost:

- Accommodation at Le Soleil Hotel for 9 nights with daily breakfast.
- Overnight accommodation at a selected hotel near Chennai International Airport on 5 January including breakfast.
- Two delicious traditional dinners, as indicated in the travel itinerary.
- Singing workshops with Kim Cunio and Heather Lee.
- Two individual vocal sessions with Heather Lee.
- Attendance at one music event as part of Auroville's music calendar.
- Travel by shuttle bus from a designated hotel near Chennai International Airport (meeting point) to the hotel in Auroville. And a return shuttle bus from Auroville to Chennai – note that the departure time will accommodate those flying on the suggested flight (see suggested group flight below).
- Shuttle bus for organised group excursions as specified in the itinerary.
- CD recording of final concert shared as a post-tour memento.

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

The following arrangements are **not** included:

- Air travel (see recommended group flights below).
- Travel and medical insurance (this is an essential requirement).
- Lunches, dinners and excursions that are not included in the itinerary.
- Entrance fees and transportation costs on free afternoons and day.
- Personal expenses and incidentals.

SUGGESTED GROUP FLIGHT

The airline carrier we recommend for this tour is Singapore Airlines. Flight SQ 232 departs Sydney for Singapore at 12.15 pm on Monday 5 January. This flight connects with Flight SQ528 bound for Chennai and departing Singapore at 8.25 pm. Since Flight SQ528 is scheduled to arrive in Chennai at 10 pm, we will overnight at a hotel close to the airport.

It is essential that you reach Chennai International Airport by the evening of Monday 5 January 2015.

The suggested return flight is SQ 529 departing Chennai at 23.15 pm on Thursday 15 January 2015. Please note that the bus transfer from Auroville to Chennai will accommodate group members who will be on this flight.

If you need additional information or advice about your flights to and from Chennai, please feel free to contact William Suganda (details below).

IF YOU ARE TRAVELING ON TO OTHER PARTS OF INDIA OR ELSEWHERE, PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOUR ONWARD TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE TOUR'S CONCLUDING TIME. PLEASE DO NOT MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO LEAVE THE HOTEL BEFORE 1 PM ON 16 JANUARY 2014.

GROUP OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION ON MONDAY 5 JANUARY 2015

Accommodation at a hotel near Chennai International airport on Monday 5 January 2014 is included in the tour cost and this is where we will meet on Tuesday 6 January 2014 (more details will be provided closer to the group's departure date).



Additional Information

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Please read the following important information with care:

Exchange rate – the tour is priced in Indian Rupee using the exchange rate of 1 AUD = 55.57 INR. If the Indian rupee drops considerably in value against the Australian dollar, we will need to adjust the tour costs appropriately. We will notify you before the final payment is due.

Tour viability: we need a minimum of 8 participants for this tour to proceed. We will limit this tour to a maximum of 18 participants, plus your tour leaders.

Limited single rooms are available at an additional cost. If you are traveling on your own and are happy to share we will do our best to allocate you a twin-share room with a congenial traveler.

Travel and medical insurance is required. You must provide a copy of your insurance certificate to Inspired Traveller before departure. It is possible to purchase travel and medical insurance from our travel agent (details below).

A pre-departure meeting will be held in Sydney about 3 weeks before the tour's departure. Important tour information will be distributed. If you don't live in Sydney or cannot attend we will post these documents to you and is available by phone to answer any questions.

Water and tea are included with meals.

Please read the booking conditions and the cancellation policy on the application form.

ACCOMMODATION

In Auroville we stay for 9 nights in the delightful Le Soleil Hotel situated in the peaceful 'greenbelt'. Rooms are comfortable and equipped with en-suites.

LUGGAGE

Please do not take more luggage than you can comfortably carry for some time by yourself.

TO BOOK

To secure your place on this tour please complete the application form and send it with your A\$500 deposit to:

Fax Therese Moran
My Way Travel
+61 2 8580 5771

Email therese@mywaytravel.com.au

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For enquiries about the tour, including the travel itinerary, suggested group air travel, and health or fitness, please contact:

William Suganda at *Inspired Traveller*

Email william@inspiredtraveller.com.au

Phone +61 2 8005 0978 (Australia)

If your enquiry specifically relates to additional travel arrangements to complement this tour, payments and travel/medical insurance, please contact:

Therese Moran at *My Way Travel* (Licence No: 2TA5418):

Email therese@mywaytravel.com.au

Phone +61 2 9327 7400



