

Don't take it from us. Here's what our guests say.



“What a great tour that you took on! Thanks for all the remarkable time spent seeing other people’s lives. By now it seems like a dream. Besides all the obvious great parts of the trip, I really like that you and Pulak got us out to walk so often. It was a good balance to the riding on the bus. That was a nice size group too - not too large.” Odisha tour - **Carolyn Braaksma, Minnesota**

“I traveled to Myanmar with EYHO Tours and have **nothing but praise** for this company. Well-thought out itinerary, covering expected sights and to satisfy the more adventurous, areas recently opened up to tourists. Shila Desai's expertise and high attention to detail meant seamless shifts between accommodation, transportation, and sightseeing. She was great at coping with the unexpected. When a service provider let Shila down by not supplying e-bikes, she quickly subbed horse drawn carts, at her expense, no fuss! Excellent value and honoured all promises.” **Penny Robinson, Kingston, ON**

“I can't tell you how glad I am that I signed up for your trip. It was so interesting and combined such a wide array of activities. Very unusual. It's thanks in part to your textile tours that I developed such an interest in textiles. I'm hoping the day comes soon when I can travel with you again!” – **Christine Brown, Washington.**

“Thank you again for the excellent organisation before our January 2020 Gujarat trip. I found it the best and most helpful of any trip I have done, and I especially appreciated it as I had never traveled to India before. Your lists and the efficiency were excellent. The fabulous memories and textiles have buoyed my spirits through this difficult C19 year. I have highly recommended your trips to all my friends.” – **Deborah Foster-Gaitskell, Melbourne, Australia**



“Shila’s boundless energy and commitment created lifelong memories” – **Dunja K., Toronto, ON**

“This was a life changing trip in many respects. There was in depth exposure and unhurried appreciation of the tribal cultures of Odisha. I gained new perspectives on the challenges of the rapid growth of India and preserving its cultural heritage. The guide and staff were great and my fellow travelers a pleasure to be with. I would highly recommend this trip.” – **Sharon, Toronto, ON**



“My husband and I had an extraordinary time. It was truly a trip of a lifetime and was made possible by Shila's careful planning and attention to detail.” – **Cathy Laverty, Mississauga, ON**

“Amazing...travelling with a tour leader with Western sensibilities who knows this country intimately from childhood” **Mina S. – Migration safari**

“My aha! moment on the trip: (so many it was hard to narrow it down to one!) I do keep going back though to the absolutely magical night in Udaipur at the Maharana’s Palace and an evening reception, complete with a cooking demo by the gorgeous and gracious women of the royal family. We were on our best behavior, comfortable after a week in our Indian garb and relaxed with one another in the group. The lakeside palace location was awe-inspiring in its beauty under a full moon, lit by candlelight, in the presence of Indian royalty, dining on unbelievably delicious food, with a group of wonderful women all added up to an evening that I will never forget.” **Carolyn Wright – Cooking With Maharajas**



“... Shila uses local contacts to arrange ‘insider’ experiences that the average tourist would either not know about or would not be able to find. A huge advantage that Shila understands Indian culture and language and could explain interactions and encounters with empathy and understanding. She was a wonderful cultural bridge for those of us who were from different backgrounds. I’ve recommended her trips to many people without hesitation.” **Val MacDonald, North India tour**

“I have travelled extensively on several continents and spent a good part of my life in India, but this trip was one of my best travel experiences because it combined unparalleled access with social responsibility and cultural sensitivity. This textile trip managed to achieve everything one could hope for in a specialty group tour: a creatively curated itinerary, meticulous planning, flawless execution and wonderful travel companions. I would love to travel with Shila again, and no doubt will sometime soon.” – **Rekha Karambayya, Etobicoke, ON**



“I could not have had a more perfect experience of Africa. Fortunately, exceeded my expectations. Great accommodations, terrific food, superb weather, incredible wildlife viewings, beautiful scenery . . . just an unforgettable experience and our guide Gerhard was fantastic. All in all, highly recommend E.Y.H.O. tours, safe bet to make your Safari a success!” – **Helen Mahadeo**, Toronto, Botswana and Namibia safari 2018

“Sitting in the airport after just completing the 17 day North India textile tour encompassing Gujarat for the most part. Notwithstanding a couple of health issues and the shock of poverty, filth and rubbish in India this has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. Our guide Nirav was a font of knowledge and bent over backwards to make sure our trip was as stress free and enjoyable as possible - a truly remarkable man that words cannot do justice. We visited villages that tourists rarely go and were welcomed into homes that I am sure would not have been possible if it wasn't for Nirav's friendly and enthusiastic manner with everyone he encountered. So generous to share his knowledge. A particular highlight (amongst hundreds) was his self tailored outfits to match the artisanal craft we were visiting that day. Shila met up with us in the last week and she too is an amazing woman, very warm and personable. A lovely, lovely woman who is highly knowledgeable about India and its customs and culture. The sights I have seen, the experiences I was honoured to have undertaken will stay with me forever. Just waiting now for a big package to arrive now in a few weeks. A word of warning, only a very strong person not interested in textiles will fail to purchase. The quality of the work we saw was exceptional. The real deal ? yes I spent way too much! I would be happy to talk to anyone thinking about doing this tour to share my experiences and reassure them that they would not regret it. Thank you Shila and Nirav.” – **Jodie Watkins**, Australia, GKR 2019

Thank you for leading our group on such an exceptional tour of northwest India. I was the clear textile rookie in the crowd, and I learned so much. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and the other six women in our merry band. Nirav was a superb guide. So pleased I joined you!” – **Patsy Anderson**, Toronto, GKR 2019

A truly amazing trip. I cannot thank you enough for your hospitality, care, knowledge and incredible itinerary. A truly #incredibleindia experience! - **Maureen Lily**, 2016
Culinary

Hi Shila,

I just wanted to thank you for such an amazing trip. I am so glad I got to see India with you. We were both so blown away by the artisans and textiles. Only when we unpacked did we realize how much we actually bought. Oh my goodness! You really are amazing. You put so much work into it and it shows. I am sure you must be exhausted. I don't know how you do it for so long. I look forward to reminiscing when you return. Keep well and I hope the rest of your trips are as successful as the one we just did.

Best,

Monique - GKR 2018



I enjoyed the tour immensely. - **Judith Exler** – NYC – GKR 2018

E.Y.H.O.'s Arts and Crafts and Day of the Dead tour of Mexico in October 2017 was breathtaking. We were lucky to have two fabulous tour leaders. One was Shila herself, organising our daily outings and marvellous accommodation and meals, and in her inimitable fashion encouraging us to share our thoughts and reactions and properly communicate with each other from day one. This really worked.

Additionally we had the huge benefit of Chloe Sayer, curator and expert in Mexican art and culture, who introduced us to artisan families and their skills. We watched their creative processes in small workshops that we could never have stumbled upon without Chloe's guidance or her personal friendships with the artists themselves. It was a huge privilege to join this tour and if repeated, must NOT be missed. – **Ruth Bunday**, U.K. – Mexico/Oaxaca 2017

I'm still re-living and remembering our marvellous tour in Mexico. I needed to get home and let it perk awhile in my brain to begin to absorb and relish all the wonderful people we met and the arts and crafts we saw. When I look at any of the treasures I brought home, or the photos, I get a smile on my face and a good feeling – what a trip!! And I'm amazed at the boundless energy you have, Shila! – **Carol Koenig**, Fergus, ON

Just make sure I am on your new trip list. Would love to travel with you again.
-- **Maddi Ring**, NYC

Aside from your superb itinerary, excellent selection of accommodations, sites and restaurants, your leadership is one of the many reasons I look forward to travelling with E.Y.H.O. – **Miriam Baichman**, Morocco



Thanks Shila, once again for an unforgettable trip to India. Your care, help and consideration in getting us back safely to the U.K. when the pandemic was declared is much appreciated – **Barbara Goodall**, Derbyshire, U.K.

South India with E.Y.H.O. Tours was the beginning of my love affair with India and its unique arts and culture. Travelling with a small group was marvellous. The tour itself was beyond my wildest expectations - the personal touch that was provided by Shila and her professional and knowledgeable tour guides made for an intimate experience -



of the country, the people, the beauty, art and spirituality. Every day was a wonder that unfolded smoothly from start to end. The sense of pulling back the curtain on usual tourist destinations and going beyond to unique experiences with local hosts and people. The accommodations were unique - a gorgeous houseboat, an old Gentleman's Club converted to the most luxurious hotel, desert glamping, unique small boutique hotels, etc. I felt steeped in the culture of South India and

would highly recommend this trip whether it is a first time in India or not. – **Dalia Margalit Faircloth**, Vancouver

Re South India : This should be a once a year trip not a one - off! For myself and my friends invited to join me to celebrate my 65th birthday on this adventure - it was beyond memorable from the beginning in Chennai to the tip of Cochin in Kerala - the temples were outstanding the color and the architecture sang to those of us interested in history and culture. The colors still explode in my mind when I daydream. So many local stories intertwined - Pondicherry is not to be missed. I waited 35 years to return to India - my first trip was to Rajasthan and had wanted to go to back to the south of Indian ever since! It more than lived up to its images - and to be able to share it with close friends and new ones - Shila in particular was beyond special. – **Nancy Singer**, Toronto

South India - Jaw-dropping exploration of a part of India beloved by Indian tourists and little known by the rest of us who focus on more publicized areas. An explosion of colour everywhere one looks - from the clothing to the painted buildings to the floral offerings. Highlights for me included the awe-inspiring Meenakshi women's temple, joyful dance

classes at Kalakshetra, and the exquisite mansions of Chettinad. But I am arbitrarily selecting from an embarrassment of riches. This trip will change your view of India - and maybe of yourself. It resonates with me still, four years later. – **Lyndsay Green**, Vancouver

The South India tour takes in things you would never see anywhere else - not even in India. This includes the French atmosphere of old Pondicherry, the amazing mansions of the Chettinars who were the banking class, the amazing temples of Tamil Nadu including the rock-cut temples by the sea at Mamallapuram and the great Minakshi temple at Madurai, tea gardens and the backwaters of Kerala. In addition you stay at some wonderful places including a tea planter's bungalow and a houseboat on the backwaters. The food of South India is great, too. I would recommend this tour to anyone with a passion for India. Read Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small things* to get a flavour of the region.

Kathie Kurtz, Fergus, ON (repeat traveller 7x)



Re Simrin Desai

Traveling to India was a life changing experience for me in so many ways- Never being on a guided tour before, I'm not sure if I would have ever taken this trip alone. I lucked out, with the guidance of Shila and Simrin and they're grounded, knowledgeable and caring lead I was able to see, touch, taste, and breath in the abundance of beauty of India. Simrin moves in service of the heart and each transition and exploration I truly felt nurtured and held in a way that is beyond any travel or textile tour that I could have dreamed up- besides seeing the most beautiful and important textiles of the world, I came home with a connection to the heart and culture of India and it will not be forgotten.

Molly de Vries

Ambatalia, for a non-disposable life
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Simrin herself was one of the most memorable and inspiring parts of our trip. She is immensely thoughtful and knowledgeable about the region, and she approaches local community members, artisans, and tour participants alike with warmth, respect, and a deep sense of integrity. I looked forward to hearing Simrin's perspectives and continually admired her patience, level-headedness, and generous spirit. I can't imagine a better guide for this tour.

Megan Sweeney

Arthur F. Thurnau Professor
Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Dept. of Afroamerican and African Studies,
University of Michigan
Director, English Department Writing Program

Kind, sensitive, wise, creative, energetic, funny, and bright; it was an absolute pleasure to travel with Simrin. She demonstrated a deep respect for the people and cultural traditions that we were so fortunate to witness in abundance during our Textile Tour. Simrin will help you to experience Gujarat in all of its splendor and richness.

- **Michael Carlin**, Michigan / 2016 Textiles Tour

Simrin has a lovely, calm personality that is perfect to chaperone a group. Our trip was even more fun due to her interest and engagement in the tour activities. I appreciated having her there to handle all travel details, and envy her language skills and ability to adapt.

-**Anita Anderson**, Belize / 2016 Textiles Tour

Unedited client to client testimonial (later shared with us)

Hi, Shila gave me your name as a reference because I am considering the trip to Orissa next year. I assume you enjoyed her tour in the past. I would like to know a couple of things.

1. How did she handle problems- guest forgetting passport, squabbles among guests, any arrangements that fell through, stuff like that.

I am happy to provide the highest reference for Shila and her tours. Actually, I have taken two—one this year and one last year. And I plan to continue traveling with her.

1. Handling problems: she is very astute at handling any issues which come up and that is important because the nature of these tours gives rise to some amount of unpredictability. In the first tour, we had to struggle with the recent monetary change in India, making getting cash difficult for Indians and foreigners alike. She was resourceful in finding ATM's which had money and no long lines. A couple travelers had particular problems with their own cards, but Shila made sure that they found a place to get money. This last time (which was a very small experimental, first-time tour) she got a not very helpful recommendation for a place to stay from her local guide. She worked all night the first night to get better accommodations for the second night at no additional cost to us. You won't have that problem but yes, something will come up.

Another example, I am not the most agile, mobile person and she always made sure I was comfortable and safe. And there was no problem if I declined to participate in something (like going down into a deep stepwell) that I thought was beyond my ability.

2. How willing is she to answer questions about the culture outside of the three talks she is scheduled to give--such as on long rides, at meals or during activities?

She is so knowledgeable and there is a constant stream of interesting background information. She definitely used bus and mealtimes. I don't even remember particular set times for presentations; it was all an integral part of the tour. You will not be disappointed.

3. Overall, what was the mood of the trip you were on--high energy, fun, stressing to keep up, not enough to do, or...whatever your experience was.

Interesting question—there were so many things we did that there were periods of different energies. Never “not enough to do”. And she warned us that there is always a day part way through the tour where there is a general flagging of group energy—she is very sensitive to the feelings of the group. In both tours there was a lot of time spent in transportation to these out of the way places so that gave us some needed down

time. Then we would get to our intended place, and we would all have high energy. And overall, a sense of how incredibly lucky we were to be doing this and anticipation for the next event.

One thing is that Shila attracts a great group of travelers and I have made continuing friends from both tours. And she has a lot of repeat travelers.

Another thing that I particularly appreciate is that Shila really cares for the welfare of the artisans we meet. She tries very hard to support those places that give good value to the artisans for their work. There is a strong ethical basis to all she does.

Now I have to confess that after traveling with Shila, I consider her a dear friend. This last weekend I had a big party in Maine centered around our Native American Basketmakers. I invited 15 friends from all eras of my life, and I included Shila. And everyone just loved her! We even did an hour presentation for the group with Shila describing the stories behind the fabrics I had purchased. People were so interested; it could have gone on for hours more if we had more time. It was great fun to be Shila's guide!

We have already talked about additional tours I would like to take with Shila in the future and a lot of my other guests became interested as well.

Finally, I'm not really a "tour" person. I have a pretty high standard for being guided. But Shila gives us unique experiences with no "corporate" feel.

I will travel with Shila again, as will my friend ML, who went on the first tour and whom I am copying on this email for any additional comments.

*Do yourself a favor and go! Shila's tours are a privilege..
Carolyn W. Maine.*

Thanks for taking time to answer me.

Emily R., CA

Custom tour North India

Shila,

We have been having an amazing time. Almost every day is an experience we've wondered at or enjoyed sometimes for the wrong reasons perhaps. Just returned from a cooking lesson with a single mother of three. The food was delicious but in truth, the experience was far more meaningful than we could have

anticipated. The experiences that have impressed us the most have been the glimpses of real life in India, warts and all; the filth of the walk through the Old Delhi market on a rainy day (note to self, sandals are a better footwear choice if they are rubber and washable!); the often hair-raising trips on roads under construction, winding through small towns, dodging pedestrians, cows and bulls on the move or snaking up and down mountains with barely enough room for oncoming traffic to safely pass; the visit to the orphanage in Agra where we saw dance performances by the children and adult disabled residents; shopping in the markets in Jaipur; ziplining in the pouring rain in Jodhpur. The hotels have all been very good. However, the Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur is out of this world. I have never stayed in a hotel like this and I have probably been forever spoiled by the experience! Tomorrow we are also scheduled to meet the Maharaja here as arranged by you. In brief, because its late and I doubt I can last much longer, **you have planned a fabulous trip and I cannot thank you enough.**" *Evelyn Schusheim*

