



# RSIS India 2013





## Itinerary

Date	Activity
December 5	First student arrives late in the evening.
December 6	Students start to arrive in Mumbai.
December 7	All students arrive in Mumbai by midnight.
December 8	City tour during the day, and briefings from leaders.
December 9	Travel to Durshet Lodge early, settle in. Start project work at Khumbharghar after lunch.
December 10	Project work
December 11	Project work
December 12	Project work
December 13	Project work.
December 14	Project work. Evening, briefing from trek guides.
December 15	Leave Durshet in the morning. Start Trek at Lonavala and trek through to late afternoon. Camp at village below Fort overnight.
December 16	Trek up to Fort and hear about its history. After lunch, trek down to Kondivade and travel to Matheran. Vehicles will drop you at the bottom of the hill, then walk up to Matheran and stay overnight at Rugby House.
December 17	Visit Hasachipatti village (walk from Rugby accommodation) and do some work there for the day.
December 18	Depart for Khumbharghar. Project work
December 19	Project work
December 20	Project work – late afternoon/evening at iMagica theme park.
December 21	Project work
December 22	Project work end and return to Mumbai. International students overnight train journey up to Agra. Rajdhani Express, departs 17:40 from Mumbai Central Station, 3-tier berths, 2 <sup>nd</sup> class AC sleeper (ticket includes meals on the train). Arrives Mathura Junction at approx. 09:00 the following day.
December 23	Arrive Mathura Junction at approx. 9am. Met by Snow Leopard Trails, and drive to Agra (50km). Rest and visit Taj Mahal and Red Fort (if cloudy, visit Taj on morning of 24 <sup>th</sup> December)
December 24	Travel to Jaipur via Fetehtpur Sikri
December 25	Jaipur sight-seeing with special meal in the evening
December 26	Jaipur sight-seeing and market shopping
December 27	Travel to New Delhi in the morning and flights home.



## Team List

### International Students:

Name	School	Country
Hamish Kelly	Westminster School	Australia
Naomi Ingamells	St Philips College	Australia
Daniela Rivera Antara	Markham College	Peru
Satish Stefansson	Bayview Glen School	Canada
Mackenzie Kwort	Trinity Anglican School	Australia
Rona Glynn-McDonald	St Philips College	Australia
Julia Giest	St Clements School	Canada
Rebecca Kennedy	Ballarat Grammar	Australia
Brenna Kelly	St Clements School	Canada
Jordan Curtis	Westminster School	Australia
Donata Eik	St Cyprians School	South Africa
Sophie Foulkes	St Cyprians School	South Africa
Ruth Ranjan	Salem	Germany

### Indian Students:

Name	School	Country
Nitilaksha Singh	Mayo College	India
Kavish Jimish Sheth	Mayo College	India
Siladitya Samir	Assam Valley School	India
Ranjit Paul	Vivek High School	India

### Adults:

Name	School	Country
Vanessa Tait	Methodist Ladies College	Australia
Peter Smith	Trinity Anglican School	Australia





## Accommodation

Swadeshi Residence in Mumbai & Durshet Lodge during the project phase were both excellent. Durshet lodge provided free of charge activities and entertainment such as night time acrobatics, Indian cooking, trekking and a visit to a 300 year old battle field 8 km away.

The Rugby accommodation at Matheran is beautiful, and was the best accommodation on the trip!

## Transport

Transport from Durshet Lodge to the project site was provided in excellent vehicles fitting safety requirements. The same vehicles were provided for the mid project break.

The overnight train from Mumbai to near Agra was good and two-tier sleeper is much preferred over three tier or first class! Students and staff were split between three carriages next to each other. Leaders were put into a separate carriage, however we did have the ability to walk between carriages. Students were grouped together, which provided some security.

The bus provided by Snow Leopard Trails was good and luggage could be stowed underneath bus for extra space and safety. They provided a very good driver and assistant.

DAIS provided a school bus to drive the group around during our one day in Mumbai prior to departure and then to the train station. This transport was excellent in terms of keeping the group together.

## City Tour Mumbai

One day after the students arrived in India, they were allowed out of their accommodation to explore the sites of Mumbai! Travelling all together on a private-hire bus, the students arrived in the city centre and because it was a Sunday the team was lucky in that it was less busy on the city roads by Indian standards.

The team first visited the city laundry on their tour, which was a fascinating place where all the bedding for hotels, and clothes ready to be sold went to get washed or dyed. It is located under the city next to one of the many Ghats, and is an ancient form of washing that







survives until today. From there the students visited the Gandhi Museum, set in one of his old houses. This place gave a great insight into the life and influence of Gandhi, through scriptures, quotes and miniature sculptures.

The students also had the full-on tourist experience in Mumbai - visiting India Gate, where they met plenty of people wanting to meet them and take their picture, with bountiful street food and giant balloons!

The group then enjoyed their first meal out as a complete group, with far too much delicious food, where the waiters would not accept no as an answer if asked if we were full! Simply walking the streets is a joy in Mumbai, with the influence of the English and Portuguese colonial architecture still very much evident. The students finally rested at the water's edge in what is called the "Queens Necklace" and took in the humid semi fresh air and took some happy snaps!

## Project

Khumbharghar is a very beautiful and secure village. It is an excellent location as the DAIS work was well established in the village, and students were able to see work that had been done in the past, and see how their new room for the school and one house would add to that work. Interaction with locals was minimal as we were so busy and they were shy to approach us not having any English, and no teaching occurred due to lack of time.



With a team of only 17 students, two leaders, one security, and one DAIS staff member, we had a lot of work to do in very humid conditions. The work to be done on site was mixing concrete, making mud bricks weighing 11 kg each, and made manually with a machine by the team members. These bricks needed to be carried in a chain over the distance of approximately 300m up a hill, this was the work in which took the most amount of people

and time, and could have been done forever! We also had to move gravel and sand around 50m up to the site as it was needed.



The team was never without work to be completed and by the end of the project the schoolhouse had one room (out of three) completed with doorframes and windows in, and the same for the family house.







We were fortunate to have had DAIS already do the huge work of laying our foundations and filling it in, however it was long days in the sun, which the students of RSIS did without complaint. The most satisfying job for most was laying the bricks that had been transported by hand to the top of the hill.





It was nice to be able to stand back knowing that everyone in the team had made or carried every brick which formed this school and which will contribute to the betterment of that village's education.

One house was also completed except for the roof, and will be given to a young man and his wife from the village who assisted us in building it.

## Mid-project Break Trek in the Western Ghats

The group was transported up to the fort on day one. The Leaders chose not to have the group walk the track as this seemed unnecessary and would prevent them from climbing to the fort on that day. The route to the fort was fairly easy with excellent views from the top. Students had an option to not do the second fort, which only four students and assistant leader completed in the end.







Our overnight campsite was spectacular, with running water and food provided from the local village. Our guide Amul provided a BBQ, which the students used for cooking that night which was entertaining!

Our second day was a proper trek with our bags down a fairly steep slope. Due to the slippery nature of the “ball bearing rocks” some students did have difficulty with this second day, but all completed it in good time and headed off to the bus pick-up point where we would be transported to the luxury of our overnight accommodation at Matheran.

## Matheran

The team had two nights at Matheran, with a day of project work in between near a village called Hassachipatti (where DAIS is also doing community project work). Doing a different project for a day as a mid project break was a struggle mentally, however the team pulled together to complete a section of the path down to this remote community.



Matheran is a hill-station with only a railway connecting it to anything below, so was a welcome break from the hot dry environment in which the students had been working at Khumbharghar. The feeling of relief was assisted by the extraordinary accommodation at



the Rugby facility which gave us warm showers and comfortable beds to sleep in after our hike!

## Other Activities

Visiting the amazing Imagica theme park was a welcome break for most of the students, as the project was nearing completion. We visited it at night and were told that over 10,000 people were also there that day! Although it caused some concern, by the time the group was arriving, a lot of the crowd was starting to dissipate. Even then, some of the lines were over 2 hours long so the students enjoyed eating popcorn and other treats, and rode on as many rides as they could in the space of three hours.

This was an interesting opportunity to see the stark contrast between the huge poverty in the village we had been working in nearby and the middle classes enjoying family days out at a theme park. Being close to Christmas it was a lovely treat to give the group after working such long and difficult days.

Other activities which provided valuable insights into life in rural India were as simple as buying fruit at a local market which we drove through daily, or dressing in saris. The students also enjoyed the pool at the accommodation as a relief from the heat!







DAIS held a fete at the school in Mumbai on one of the last nights and this was perfect timing. The fete held an international theme, serving pizzas, fairy floss/cotton candy, and a variety of other treats!

On the final night one student from Mayo College invited the group around to his home for tea which was conveniently around the corner from the hotel. This was such a lovely way to celebrate the group's last night and much appreciated by everyone.

## Tour at the end of the trip



These days were based around taking it easy and allowing the students to choose the activity of the day (which mainly seemed to consist of shopping!). We had a lovely mixture of planned tours of historical sites, as well as free time that we could structure ourselves.

We had two separate tour guides - one for Agra and one for Jaipur. Agra was excellent and the team saw the Taj Mahal on the same day as we arrived by train, so everyone was a little exhausted. However, this did not detract from the sight seeing and it was a real highlight of the trip.

Jaipur consisted of seeing the Amber Fort and shopping on day one. Day two consisted of seeing the Mantar Jantar Observatory and the City Palace, with more shopping in the afternoon!





*"The entire experience was one I will never forget! I met so many amazing people that will be some of my closest friends. The activities pushed us to our limits and brought us all together as a group. The leaders were great and really helped us feel at home and showed us around this crazy, but wonderful country!"*

*"The trip to India was so amazing. I learned so many things like dealing with situations without any advice from my parents! I met people from different countries and we all grew as a group together. Thank you!"*

*"There were always new experiences around every corner. I really feel like all the students bonded strongly, worked well together as a team, and always looked out for one another and lent a helping hand. I learned so many new things about India and the people who live here and I had the trip of a lifetime! It was incredible to see the house and the classroom that we made and to meet the children who will use the classroom."*



*All in all – a wonderful trip, with a great team who seemed to make the most of every opportunity presented to them. We hope the memories stay long and vivid in the team's minds for years to come!*

**Vanessa Tait**  
**Project Leader**