



Friends in Khajuraho association

Friends in Khajuraho is a French association 'Loi de 1901' founded in June 2017 by:

Violette Soni. Vio is French and has been living in India for 10 years. For several years she has been teaching English, Hindi and Indian violin. Since 2010 she has also been working for various NGOs such as the French Partage et Culture Sarasvati (partage-culture-sarasvati.org) of which she is vice-president.



Aurélie Cadilhac. Aurélie is the founder of Centre Prana (centre-prana.fr), a unique Indian healthcare and yoga centre for all in Vienne, France. She is a yoga teacher and holds a Masters degree in Social Entrepreneurship.



Vijay Soni. Vijay, Vio's husband, originally from Khajuraho, has been the head of his family since he was 16. He is devoted, charismatic and very popular in Khajuraho. He owns the Friends in Khajuraho homestay (friends-in-khajuraho.com) and has been involved in social work since 2010.



OUR MISSION

To allow the local population to live with dignity in a healthy environment through adequate education and resources.

We work in Khajuraho, in the heart of India.



Khajuraho is located 620 kilometres south east of Delhi with a population of 24,000 people. It is the main town of Bundelkhand, a geographical region divided between the states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, famous for the diamond mines of Panna, the palaces of Orchha and the Kama Sutra temples of Khajuraho, to name but a few of its wonders.

The Khajuraho group of monuments is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. One of the most popular tourist destinations in India, Khajuraho has the largest group of medieval Hindu and Jain temples, famous for their erotic Kama Sutra sculptures.

As it is a small town, the residents of Khajuraho are very traditional and the level of education is low, especially in the Old Village where we live.

OUR PROJECTS

THE DIFFERENT SCHOOL *for village children*

In local schools education simply means memorising, so children are good at learning by heart but they don't understand what they learn. They are not encouraged to think by themselves or to be creative. Worst of all, **they are motivated**



to learn by fear, because they get beaten if they don't repeat what their teacher has told them word for word.

With our after-school classes, we want our pupils to **understand** what they learn and to invite them to **be creative** so that they can become **confident** and **independent** individuals. Most of all, we want to teach them that **learning can be fun**.

Our subjects

- **English**, because it is very badly taught in local schools.
- **Music**, as it helps children's social and emotional development, allowing them to express themselves and communicate, and it contributes to intellectual and motor skills.
- **Art, painting & drawing**, because here, with so many strict rules and such a lack of education, children's creativity is discouraged from a very young age.
- **Environmental awareness**, as rubbish (non-) management is a huge problem in India.

BETTER LIVING PROGRAM

Our Better Living program aims to **improve our community's living conditions** by providing adequate education and resources, allowing them to live with dignity in a healthy environment.

By 'our community' we mean the population of the Old Village, but we don't limit ourselves to this definition when we have opportunities to support the wider population in and around Khajuraho.



Practical objectives

- **To offer a professional activity to local women** which will give them more autonomy and help them feel valued within our community.
- **To protect the environment**, firstly by recycling fabric with our Cloth Bag project and regularly cleaning the rubbish in the village, both of which provide an example for our community. Secondly, by running an education campaign for our neighbours to stress the importance of reducing the use and littering of plastic and to encourage them to use (and reuse!) our cloth bags.
- **To recycle and redistribute clothing to our neighbours**, in particular those who are most impoverished.



The Better Living program includes:

CLOTH BAG PROJECT

Launched in September 2017 with a group of local women, the Cloth Bag Project aims to:

- **fight against single-use polythene bags**, which end up littering our towns and countryside.



- **recycle all types of fabrics** as hand-made bags.
- **empower local women**, especially those who are impoverished and/or wives of alcoholics, by

allowing them to sell their bags to local shops and individuals, earn a living and be more independent.

CLOTHING DISTRIBUTION

This part of our program improves living conditions by distributing items of clothing to those who don't have enough. The need is severe in winter, during which people are badly equipped to face the short but sometimes bitter cold months of December and January. Whenever possible we also distribute shoes, bedding, blankets, toys, etc.



We always keep an eye on those who need clothing in our community and organise distributions in villages around Khajuraho.

ECO-FRIENDLY PROMISE

The eco-friendly promise is our commitment to keep our environment clean and to educate the local population, through the following actions:



- **Organising regular litter-picking sessions with local children and/or adults**, in particular those involved with The Different School and the Cloth Bag Project.
- **Providing an example for our community**, so that with time we will inspire more of our neighbours to care for their environment.
- **Educating our neighbours about how litter damages our world**, from the large-scale environmental reasons to the local economic effects on our tourist industry.
- **Putting pressure on the local authorities and municipality**, for example to provide dustbins and organise adequate rubbish collection.

PARTNERSHIP

In partnership with the Norwegian association **Ganpati** (ganpati.no), we also **sponsor** a poor family of 10 and run **literacy classes** in the small village of Tikri, 6km away from Khajuraho.



HOW YOU CAN HELP US

Volunteer: We are always looking for **volunteers** to teach **music** and **art** at The Different school. And if you are interested in teaching **any other creative, artistic discipline** we want to hear from you!

Donate: We are currently looking for **regular** or **one-off donators**. If you want to make a material donation (stationery, art & painting supplies, musical instruments, clothes & toys, fabric, etc.) please do not hesitate to contact us. You can also **become a member** of our association if you make a donation or give your time and energy to our cause.

Homestay: If you are planning a trip to India, do **come and stay with us**. You can **participate in one of our projects** during your stay! For more information please visit friends-in-khajuraho.com.

Contact us:

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