

Indus Valley Civilization, Ancient Tamil Nadu, and the Deep Past of South Asia:

A Two-Week, Specialist-Led, Academically-Orientated Field Seminar in North and South India with a Strong Emphasis on Primary Sites, Material Culture, and Live Discussion. V260615a.

Logistics by Kensington Tours: Visit Kensington's presentation of the tour here:

<https://clients.kensingtontours.com/quote/4749908Zin16>

Subject-Matter Experts

Dr. Steven C. Bonta – Entire Tour

Steven holds an MA in linguistics from Brigham Young University (thesis topic: Indus Valley Script) and a PhD in linguistics from Cornell University (thesis topic: Negombo Fishermen's Tamil). He is currently an Honorary Research Professor at Aror University, Sukkur, Pakistan. His specializations include South Asian languages (both Dravidian and Indo-Aryan), language contact phenomena, semiotics, and the Indus Valley script. Steven speaks Sinhala, Tamil, and some Hindi (among other languages), and has studied Sanskrit, Pali, and Avestan extensively. Selected publications, including a partial decipherment of the Indus Valley script, are available on academia.edu.

Nakul Chhabra – North India (Delhi, Rakhigarhi, Dholavira, Lothal)

Nakul is a cultural storyteller and archaeologist whose work is anchored in a simple conviction: history is best understood where it happened, not where it is written about. He holds an MA in Archaeology and Heritage Management from the Delhi Institute of Heritage Research and Management, with additional training in pedagogy. His interests center on the human decisions embedded in drainage systems, brick typologies, warehouse layouts, and burial practices. He works actively with the Haryana Department of Archaeology and Museums, conducting heritage walks at Rakhigarhi and bringing current on-the-ground familiarity to this site.

Vijay Prabhat Kamalakara – South India (Chennai, Madurai, Keeladi, Adichanallur)

Vijay is founder and CEO of StoryTrail and a widely recognized presenter, with substantial public-facing content available on YouTube. With deep expertise in Tamil Nadu archaeology and history, he combines scholarly rigor with the ability to address live, contested historical questions in front of an engaged audience. Given the tour's dual focus on linguistics and archaeology, Vijay's skills are especially important for the southern culmination of the journey.

Itinerary Overview

Monday, 8 February – Arrive Delhi

Meet and greet on arrival, transfer to hotel, check-in.

Depending on arrival time, optional welcome dinner with the subject expert.

Tuesday, 9 February – Delhi

Morning: Visit to the National Museum (closed on Monday), focusing on the Harappan Gallery.

3–5-hour session with the subject expert, covering seals, weights, pottery, figurines, and script samples, establishing a shared material vocabulary for the field component.

Lunch at a local restaurant.

Evening: Orientation session on the IVC in broader context—geographic span, timeline, and the script question as the spine of the tour. Dinner at a local restaurant.

Wednesday, 10 February – Delhi to Rakhigarhi (by surface)

Morning: Drive to Rakhigarhi (approximately 3.5 hours).

Afternoon: Site visit with expert and local guide; 11 mounds have been identified, 2 currently accessible.

Lunch at a local restaurant.

Informal interaction with the local community, whose oral histories maintain connections to the site.

Evening: Return to hotel; dinner at the hotel.

Thursday, 11 February – Rakhigarhi to Delhi (by surface)

Morning: Second session at Rakhigarhi, focusing on drainage systems, burial typologies, recent DNA study findings, and script material from the site.

Lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Drive back to Delhi; evening check-in and dinner at the hotel.

Friday, 12 February – Delhi to Bhuj (Flight AI-1709, 1500/1705 hrs)

Morning at leisure after breakfast.

Timed transfer to the airport; meal on board.

Arrival in Bhuj, transfer to hotel, overnight with dinner at the hotel.

Saturday, 13 February – Bhuj to Dholavira (by surface)

Morning: Drive to Dholavira (approximately 5–6 hours through the Rann of Kutch).

Early afternoon arrival, check-in, and rest; lunch at a local restaurant.

Late afternoon: Orientation walk around the site perimeter to set context for the full-day visit.

Dinner and overnight in Dholavira.

Sunday, 14 February – Dholavira

Full day at Dholavira, one of the most spectacularly preserved IVC sites and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2021.

Focus on: citadel complex, middle and lower towns, and the extraordinary water harvesting and reservoir system.

Study of the famous signboard inscription at the northern gate and anomalous burial structures and their ritual implications.

Lunch at a local restaurant.

Discussion session: What Dholavira contributes to conversations on urban planning and script, building on Rakhigarhi.

Dinner and overnight in Dholavira.

Note: Dholavira site is closed every Friday.

Monday, 15 February – Dholavira to Ahmedabad (by surface)

Morning drive to Ahmedabad (approximately 6–7 hours).

Lunch at a local restaurant.

Arrival and check-in at hotel; evening at leisure; dinner and overnight in Ahmedabad.

Tuesday, 16 February – Lothal

Morning: Visit to the Lothal site, including the dock structure, warehouse, bead factory, and trade seals—an urban center oriented to maritime commerce. Discussion of script finds: trade seals as evidence of geographic reach and the commercial function of the script.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Dinner and overnight near Lothal.

Note: Lothal site is closed every Friday.

Note: The Lothal Museum is currently closed for a major project by the National Maritime Heritage Complex (expected completion around 2029–2030), but the archaeological site itself remains accessible.

Wednesday, 17 February – Ahmedabad to Chennai (Flight 6E-6195, 1030/1250 hrs)

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for the afternoon flight to Chennai.

Arrival in Chennai, transfer to hotel, lunch at the hotel.

Visit the IVC gallery at the Government Museum at Egmore (Chennai).

Evening orientation framing the southern leg of the journey; dinner and overnight in Chennai.

Thursday, 18 February – Chennai to Madurai (Flight AI-2739, 1155/1300 hrs)

Morning flight to Madurai.

Arrival and transfer to hotel.

Evening visit to Meenakshi Amman Temple.

Friday, 19 February – Keeladi

Drive from Madurai to Keeladi (approximately 1.5 hours).

Site visit focusing on urban settlement layout, standardized weights, pottery, and Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions.

Discussion of material continuities: pottery, urban planning patterns, and weight standards echoing Harappan traditions.

Museum visit with artifacts situating the settlement in the 6th–5th century BCE, extending timelines for Tamil urban life.

Group discussion: What Keeladi can and cannot claim in relation to the IVC.

Return to Madurai.

Saturday, 20 February – Adichanallur

Morning drive from Madurai to Adichanallur (approximately 2.5 hours).

Site visit to one of the most significant Iron Age burial sites in South Asia, noted for its large-scale urn burials since the 19th century.

Exploration of evidence for an organized, stratified society in peninsular India well before the Common Era.

Thematic framing: Adichanallur as deep-time context for honestly situating IVC–Tamil relationships, despite not being an IVC site.

Closing conversation: tracing the arc from Rakhigarhi to Adichanallur—what the group has engaged, questioned, and taken away.

Return to Madurai.

Sunday, 21 February – Departure

After breakfast, transfer to Madurai for flight to Mumbai, or connect on your own for transportation home.

Bon Voyage, End of Tour

Notes for Participants:

Travel times, flight numbers, and site access (especially museums) are subject to local conditions and may change. Some connections may change in the interest of efficiency. Updated information will be provided as necessary.

Hotels Envisaged:

Delhi: The Lalit (Deluxe room) - 2 nights
Rakhigarhi/Gurgaon: Hyatt Regency (Regency room) - 1 night
Delhi: Roseate House (Deluxe room) - 1 night
Bhuj: Regenta Resort (Executive room) - 1 night
Dholavira : Rann Resort (AC Rann Cottage) - 2 nights
Ahmedabad: Fortune Landmark (Deluxe room) - 2 nights
Chennai: Trident (Deluxe room) - 1 night
Madurai: GRT Regency Grand Madurai (Superior room) - 3 nights

Cost Details:

Per person cost on Twin Share based on 16 pax traveling together - \$9,937/- per person
Per person cost on Twin share based on 14 pax traveling together – 10,821/- per person
Per person cost on Twin share based on 12 pax traveling together – 12,091/- per person
Per person cost on Twin share based on 10 pax traveling together – 12,515/- per person

Single room supplement cost is fixed - \$1500/- (this is on top of per person pricing)

Your deposit is due immediately on booking (30% of program price, minimum \$350). The balance is due 90 days prior to departure. Read the 'fine print' here:

<https://clients.kensingtontours.com/quote/4749908Zin16>

The cost includes all internal flights (but not external flights to & from India), all meals and hotels mentioned on the itinerary, all entrance fees and government taxes. All ground transportation to and from sites is in an AC Large Coach.

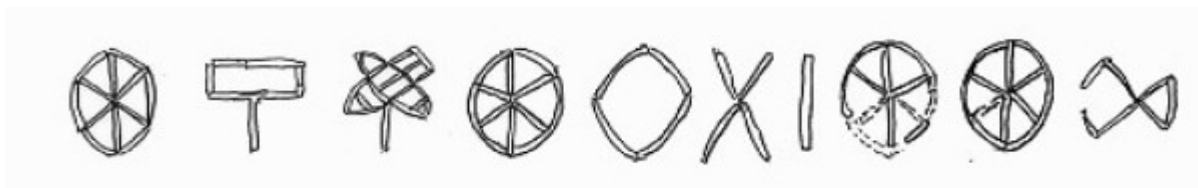
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Link to this overview: <https://noelzinn.com>



Ten Indus characters from the northern gate of Dholavira, dubbed the Dholavira Signboard

Image source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dholavira>