

Best of India – Epic Indian Travel SouthIndiaExpress—Tamil Nadu & Kerala "God's Own Country"

India's most captivating southern odyssey— journeying through the ancient Dravidi an temple towns of Tamil Nadu and the lush, serene backwaters of Kerala. From the colonial heritage of Chennai and the French-flavoured streets of Pondicherry, to the spice- scented hills of Chettinad, the sacred temples of Madurai, the emerald tea gardens of Munnar, the wildlife-rich forests of Thekkady, the tranquil backwaters of Alleppey, and the multicultural port city of Cochin – this 15-day journey spans the very soul of South India.

Tamil Nadu Heritage
Chennai, Kanchipuram, Mahabalipuram, Pondicherry, Chettinad & Madurai – ancient temples, Dravidian architecture & French colonial charm

Kerala's Natural Wonders
Munnar & Thekkady – emerald tea gardens, Dolmen's Trek, spice plantations & Periyar Lake wildlife boat ride

Backwaters & Cochin
Alleppey overnight houseboat cruise, Fort Kochi heritage walk, Kathakali dance & Chinese fishing nets

Tour Route: 14 Nights / 15 Days • Chennai [2N] – Kanchipuram – Mahabalipuram – Pondicherry [2N] – Thanjavur – Trichy – Chettinad [2N] – Madurai [1N] – Munnar [2N] – Thekkady [2N] – Alleppey [1N] – Cochin [2N]



Tour Highlights



UNESCO Heritage Sites— Chennai (Fort St George), Kanchipuram, Mahabalipuram (Shore Temple), Pondicherry, Thanjavur (Brihadeeswara Temple), Trichy & Cochin



Auroville (City of Dawn) — Experimental commune near Pondicherry built on sustainable & holistic living principles



Multi-course Traditional Chettinad Meal at The Bangala — a heritage mansion in Karaikudi, famous for spicy aromatic cuisine



Weekly Market "Vaara Sabdhai" — colourful local market with greengrocers, fisherfolk and fruit vendors in Chettinad



Athangudi Tile-Making & Pottery — visit traditional handmade tile and pottery units in Chettinad



Temple Visits in Trichy, Thanjavur & Madurai — Rock Fort Temple, Sri Ranganathaswamy, Brihadeeswara & Meenakshi Amman



Food Walk in Madurai — taste legendary Madurai street food and explore vibrant bazaars around Meenakshi Temple



Dolmen's Trek in Munnar — soft trek to Neolithic-era burial chambers in Marayoor amid sandalwood forests



Spice Plantation Visit & Boat Ride in Periyar Lake — spot elephants, monkeys, deer & birds in Thekkady



Overnight Houseboat Cruise in Alleppey — glide through Kerala's 1,000 km backwater network fringed by palm groves & paddy fields



Cochin Sightseeing — St Francis Church (India's oldest European church), Chinese fishing nets, Fort Kochi & Santa Cruz Basilica



Mattancherry & Fort Kochi Heritage Walk — multicultural residences, temples, Kathakali dance performance at Kerala Kathakali Centre



Kathakali Dance Performance — authentic classical dance by artists with 35 years of dedicated craft at Kerala Kathakali Centre



Chinese Fishing Nets & Beach Stroll — iconic cantilevered fishing nets along Cochin's scenic seafront promenade



DAY 01

Arrive Chennai

Chennai, known as the 'Detroit of India', is a beautiful city situated on the Coromandel Coast – formerly called Madras. The sixth-largest city in India, it is a major industrial, commercial, cultural, economic and educational centre. The British built Fort St. George here, now the Secretariat complex of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

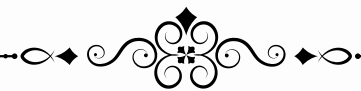
Arrival & Welcome

- Arrive at Chennai International Airport – the third busiest airport in India after Delhi and Mumbai
- Complete customs and immigration formalities (approximately one hour)
- Be greeted by our representative just after baggage collection, with a flower bouquet and company paging-board bearing your name
- Transfer to your hotel by private vehicle accompanied by our company representative
- Assisted check-in at the hotel
- Relax and freshen up after your journey
- Overnight at the hotel in Chennai

About Chennai

Chennai traces its origins to the ancient fishing village of Madraspattinam during the Nayakar rule. The British acquired land from the King of Vijayanagar to build Fort St. George – now the seat of the Tamil Nadu government. Today, Chennai is a vibrant metropolis blending ancient Dravidian culture with modern industry, home to world-class museums, colonial architecture, and one of the longest urban beaches in the world – Marina Beach.

EPIC INDIAN
TRAVEL



DAY 02

Chennai Sightseeing

Morning — Colonial Heritage Trail

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel
- Begin the tour with a visit to San Thome Basilica — Chennai's famous basilica containing the remains of the Apostle St Thomas
- Drive through old fishing villages along the beach to experience the city's early character
- Visit the popular Lighthouse for excellent panoramic views of the surroundings
- Walk through the historic Fort St George — the first fortress of British power in India
- Visit St Mary's Church inside the Fort — the oldest surviving British church in India, with connections to Robert Clive (married here in 1753) and Elihu Yale (founder of Yale University)
- Explore the Fort Museum with its fascinating collection from the East India Company era

Afternoon & Evening — Marina & Mylapore

- See various public buildings and sculptures along the Marina Promenade
- Spend time relaxing on Marina Beach — one of the longest urban beaches in the world — enjoying local life and colourful stalls
- Post lunch, return to the hotel and rest
- Evening: meet your guide for a walk through the Mylapore area — one of the religious and cultural epicentres of the Tamil people

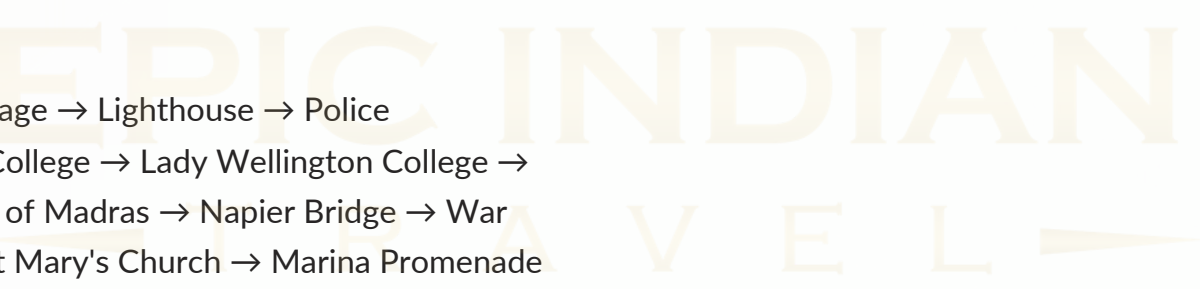
Mylapore pre-dates Chennai itself; the great shore temple dedicated to Lord Shiva once stood at this ancient thriving seaport until the Portuguese arrival

The Portuguese destroyed the temple, created a colony on the shore, and pushed Mylapore inshore — where it still stands today

- After dinner, return to the hotel for overnight stay in Chennai

Tour Route

San Thome Church → Fishing Village → Lighthouse → Police Headquarters → Queen Mary's College → Lady Wellington College → Presidency College → University of Madras → Napier Bridge → War Memorial → Fort St George → St Mary's Church → Marina Promenade → Marina Beach



DAY 03

Chennai to Pondicherry – via Kanchipuram & Mahabalipuram

155 km · 3.5 Hours Drive

Kanchipuram is an ancient cultural centre, home to several major temples and monasteries. Between the 4th and 9th century AD, under the Pallavas, the city reached its zenith as the capital city. It is also world-famous for its handloom silk textiles. Mahabalipuram was the seaport and trading centre of the Pallava kingdom – a UNESCO World Heritage site with stunning ruins and grand open-air sculptures by the seashore.

Morning – Kanchipuram, City of Temples

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel
- After breakfast, check out and begin the drive to Pondicherry (3.5 hours total), with stops en route
- First stop: Kanchipuram – also called Shiva-Vishnu Kanchi, one of the seven sacred cities of India and capital of the Pallava dynasty from the 6th century AD
- World-famous for its woven silk fabrics – Kanchipuram silk sarees are renowned for their lustre, durability and intricately patterned motifs

In Kanchipuram Visit:

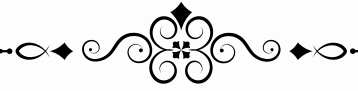
- Ekambareswar Temple – a massive temple complex named after an ancient mango tree living within its boundaries
- Kamakshi Amman Temple – dedicated to the goddess Kamakshi, the chief deity of Kanchipuram
- A tour of the silk loom to witness Kanchipuram's famous weaving tradition

Afternoon – Mahabalipuram & Pondicherry

- Drive 2 hours to Mahabalipuram – a UNESCO World Heritage site with stunning ruins and grand open-air sculptures by the seashore

In Mahabalipuram Visit:

- Shore Temple – one of the oldest structural stone temples in South India and a UNESCO heritage site
- Arjuna's Penance – a grand sculpted rock relief, one of the largest bas-reliefs in the world
- Pancha Rathas (Five Chariots) – five monolithic pyramid structures, each carved from a single piece of stone
- Resume drive for 1.5 hours to reach Pondicherry
- Arrive in Pondicherry by early evening; check in at the hotel and relax
- Late evening: dinner at one of the popular restaurants in the city
- Overnight stay in Pondicherry



DAY 04

Pondicherry Sightseeing — Auroville & French Quarter

Pondicherry was a quiet fishing village that passed through the hands of several empires & the Pallavas, Cholas and Vijayanagara kings. Beginning in the 1600s, the French developed it into a trading port. Today, Pondicherry is a charming, laid-back seaside town with a unique Franco-Tamil culture, divided into a French quarter and a Tamil quarter, each with its own distinctive character, beautiful architecture, and delicious cuisine.

Morning — Auroville (City of Dawn)

Early morning: meet your city guide for an excursion to Auroville & an experimental commune made up of people from over 50 countries, built on concepts of sustainable and holistic living

Auroville is set in a forest planted and nurtured from barren land by the Aurovilleans themselves

Start with delicious goodies at the Auroville Bakery, then head to the Visitors Centre for exhibits and a short video

See how the community turned hundreds of hectares of barren land into lush forests

Learn about waste management, women's empowerment and organic farming initiatives

Visit the Wellpaper unit & a women's empowerment initiative producing handmade items from old newspaper

Explore workshops including a musical instrument workshop, indigo dyeing workshop, bamboo experiment centre and organic farming units

Lunch at Auroville's Solar Kitchen & see the huge solar panels and learn about Auroville's energy systems

View the grand Matrumandir (Mother's Temple) & an architectural marvel (entry requires pre-booked meditation appointment)

After lunch, return to the hotel and relax

Evening — Heritage Walk through the French Quarter

Late evening: Heritage Walk through Pondicherry's historic French quarter

In 1694, the French East India Company set up a trading post in Pondicherry & their most important possession in India

The culture, cuisine and architecture of France, combined with local influences, are still visible today

Visit Sri Aurobindo Ashram & a peaceful place that was home to the renowned spiritual reformer Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950)

Walk through the pleasant streets of the French quarter past handsome houses in sunny colours

See stately government buildings like Raj Nivas and the Pondicherry Legislative Assembly

Walk through the leafy environs of Bharathi Park, dotted with statues and sculptures

Pass popular cultural institutions, quiet memorials and the Eglise de Notre Dame des Agnes (Notre Dame Church)

Stroll along the breezy seaside Promenade with interesting monuments

Optional: visit the Pondicherry Museum or receive a blessing from the temple elephant at Manakula Vinayagar Temple

After dinner, return to the hotel for overnight stay in Pondicherry



Pondicherry to Chettinad – via Thanjavur & Trichy

150 km · 3.5 Hours Drive

Chettinad is the homeland of the Chettiars – a powerful and prosperous business community whose influence is clearly discernible in the region's culture, crafts and cuisine. The old wealth of the Chettiars can still be seen in the large number of elaborate 19th-century mansions built in a mix of Indian and European styles. Apart from being famous for its spicy and aromatic cuisine, Chettinad is also known for its crafts, such as the famous Athangudi handmade tiles and the Chettinad handloom saris.

Morning – Thanjavur, City of the Big Temple

- Enjoy early breakfast at the hotel
- After breakfast, check out and drive 4 hours to Thanjavur
- Visit Brihadeeswara Temple (Thanjavur Big Temple) – a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the greatest examples of Dravidian architecture, built by Raja Raja Chola I in 1010 AD
- The temple's vimana (tower) rises to 66 metres and is one of the tallest in the world
- The massive Nandi (sacred bull) statue at the entrance is carved from a single rock

Afternoon – Trichy, Rock Fort & Sacred Island

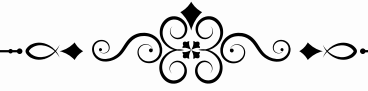
- Post lunch, continue drive for 1 hour to Trichy (Tiruchirappalli)
- Visit The Rock Fort Temple – a spectacular ancient temple complex perched atop a 83-metre high rock, offering panoramic views of the city
- Visit Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple – one of the largest functioning Hindu temples in the world, located on the sacred island of Srirangam

Evening – Arrive Chettinad

- Resume drive for 1.5 hours to reach the town of Chettinad
- Arrive in Chettinad by early evening; check in at the heritage mansion hotel and relax
- Enjoy a classical music concert as an accompaniment to your evening meal – a unique cultural experience
- Overnight stay at the Mansion in Chettinad

About Chettinad

The Chettinad region is a cluster of 75 villages in the Sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu. The Nattukotai Chettiars, once wealthy merchants who traded across Southeast Asia, built magnificent mansions here in the 19th and early 20th centuries. These palatial homes feature intricate woodwork, Athangudi tiles, Burmese teak, Italian marble and Belgian glass – a testament to the community's global connections and extraordinary wealth.



DAY 06

Chettinad Sightseeing – Tiles, Mansions & Markets

Morning – Athangudi & Heritage Villages

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel
- After breakfast, visit Athangudi to see traditional tile-making and pottery units – the brightly patterned Athangudi tiles were commissioned by the Chettiars for their mansions and are entirely handmade even today
- Drive about 30 minutes to visit Thirumayam Fort – built in the 17th century, this fort has been a site of several battles and intrigues
- Visit the small town of Kanadukathan – famous for its grand old-style mansions with elaborate woodwork, terracotta and tile work

Afternoon – The Bangala & Antiques Market

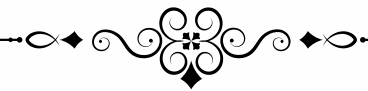
- Lunch in the town of Karaikudi: a multi-course traditional Chettinad meal at The Bangala – a traditional Chettinad residence converted by the family into a heritage hotel
- After lunch, visit the antiques market in Karaikudi – a treasure trove of old furniture, bronze idols, vintage items and collectibles
- Visit the local weaving units which produce the famous Chettinad handloom weaves
- Return to the Mansion and relax

Evening – Vaara Sabdhai Weekly Market

- Evening: visit the weekly market called "Vaara Sabdhai" – where greengrocers, fisherfolk and fruit vendors display their wares under colourful canopies
- Experience the vibrant local life and pick up fresh produce, spices and local delicacies
- Dinner at the Mansion – savour authentic Chettinad cuisine prepared with freshly ground spices
- Overnight stay at the Mansion in Chettinad

About Chettinad Cuisine

Chettinad cuisine is one of the spiciest and most aromatic in India, using a unique blend of freshly ground spices including kalpasi (stone flower), marathi mokku (dried flower pods), and star anise. The cuisine is famous for dishes like Chettinad chicken curry, kavuni arisi (black rice pudding), and the elaborate multi-course meal served on banana leaves – a true gastronomic adventure.



DAY 07

Chettinad to Madurai – City of the Meenakshi Temple

105 km · 2.5 Hours Drive

Madurai is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world and the cultural capital of Tamil Nadu. Known as the "Athens of the East", it is home to the magnificent Meenakshi Amman Temple – a towering masterpiece of Dravidian architecture with 14 gopurams (gateway towers) adorned with thousands of colourful sculptures. Madurai is not just a temple town – it is also a food town, famous for its many eateries serving a wide range of lip-smacking cuisine.

Morning – Leisurely Departure

- Wake up at leisure at your hotel
- Enjoy a leisurely breakfast at the hotel
- Check out and drive 2.5 hours to reach the temple city of Madurai
- Arrive in Madurai in time for lunch; check in at the hotel and relax

Afternoon – Meenakshi Temple Heritage Walk

- Late afternoon: Heritage Walk through the temple town
- Begin at the East Tower of the Meenakshi Amman Temple – explore the marvellous architecture and legends of this ancient shrine
- Experience the temple rituals – witness the daily puja ceremonies that have been performed for centuries
- See the sacred water-tank (Porthamarai Kulam) and the grand 1000-Pillar Hall with its exquisitely carved columns

Evening – Bazaars, Palace & Food Walk

- Walk through East Chithirai Street, leading out from the temple into the vibrant bazaars of the city
- Meander through small streets passing the tailor's market, vegetable market, banana market, flower market and many specialty shops
- The walk ends at the Thirumalai Nayakar Palace – see the beautiful entrance gate, main hall and dance hall of this 17th-century fusion of Dravidian and Islamic architectural styles
- After completing the walk, taste the legendary delights of Madurai – the city is famous for its many eateries serving a wide range of lip-smacking cuisine
- Must-try: Jigarthanda (a unique cold drink), Kari Dosa, and the famous Madurai Mutton Biryani
- Return to the hotel for overnight stay in Madurai

DAY 08

Madurai to Munnar – Queen of Kerala Hill Stations

100 km • 3.5 Hours Drive

Munnar is a town located 1,500 metres above sea level in the Western Ghats Mountain range in Kerala. The tea gardens of Munnar provide a cool respite and contrast to the humid coastal areas. Swathed in greenery, Munnar is also an ecological diversity hotspot – home to rare species of flora and fauna. The best way to explore Munnar is on foot, with a guided trek through the hills and plantations, suitable for all age groups and fitness levels.

Morning – Madurai Sightseeing Before Departure

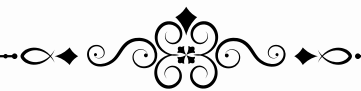
- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel
- After breakfast, check out and visit Thirumalai Nayak Palace – a 17th-century fusion of Dravidian and Islamic architectural styles, featuring a magnificent courtyard and ornate stucco work
- Visit Gandhi Memorial Museum – a 17th-century palace converted into a museum housing memorabilia related to Mahatma Gandhi, including the blood-stained dhoti he wore when assassinated
- Continue drive for 3.5 hours to reach Munnar
- Arrive in Munnar in time for lunch; check in at the hotel and rest

Afternoon & Evening – Munnar Arrival

- Late afternoon: visit Mattupetty Dam – more than just a water storage facility, the water body formed by this gravity dam is known as Mattupetty Lake
- A perennial lake that never dries up even in summer, popular with birds and wild animals that rely on this reservoir
- Return to the hotel by evening and relax
- Evening: indulge in activities organised by the hotel – nature walks, birdwatching or cultural programmes
- Overnight stay at the hotel in Munnar

About Munnar

Munnar's name means "three rivers" in Malayalam – referring to the confluence of the Muthirapuzha, Nallathanni and Kundaly rivers. Once the summer resort of the British South India administration, Munnar today is a paradise of rolling hills carpeted with tea, coffee and cardamom plantations, misty valleys and cascading waterfalls.



DAY 09

Munnar Sightseeing – Dolmen's Trek & Tea Plantations

Early Morning – Dolmen's Trek (Marayoor)

Early morning: embark on a soft Dolmen's Trek to Marayoor suitable for all age groups and fitness levels

Witness around 15 different types of Dolmens dating back to the Neolithic Age (3000 BC-14000 BC) and the Iron Age 4 above-ground burial chambers of great historical significance

The dolmens of Munnar are different from those found in Europe 4 one of the rare places where dolmens from different periods can be found in one location

The area is also known for its natural sandalwood forests and pre-historic cave paintings

Spot swifts soaring the skies or flocks of Blue Glassy Tiger Butterflies perched atop fresh lemongrass

Return to the hotel and enjoy breakfast

Morning – Tea Plantations

Visit the Tea Plantations 4 walk through the lush green tea estate and interact with Tea Pluckers to learn about the local culture and the art of tea plucking

This walk is excellent for health 4 breathe pure oxygen and enjoy peace of mind amidst the verdant hills

About the Dolmens of Munnar

While Munnar is famed for its natural beauty, most travellers don't know about the fascinating dolmens situated in Marayoor. Some historians believe the larger dolmens were built for people of higher status; others claim they were built over the burial sites of more than one person. Some even say these dolmens got the name 'Muniyara' because of the sages (muni) who took refuge in these tiny rooms (ara) 4 the truth we may never know, but it's fascinating nevertheless!

Afternoon – Tea Factory & Museum

Visit the tea factory famous for its Orthodox Tea produced in the traditional way

The museum includes a living factory built in 1936, a tea sales outlet and tea-tasting sections

Visitors receive a briefing about the origins of tea, its history and health benefits, and an explanation of traditional tea manufacturing processes
Tea tasting in the factory 4 sample different varieties of Munnar's finest teas

Browse the tea sales outlet for premium teas to take home as souvenirs

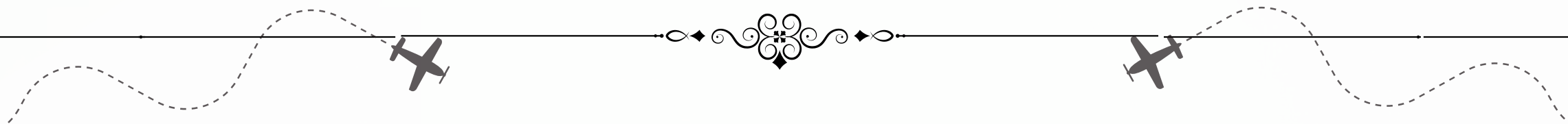
Evening – Resort Activities

Return to the hotel and relax

Optional: enjoy activities arranged by the resort 4 nature walks, cycling, birdwatching or Ayurvedic spa treatments

Overnight stay at the hotel in Munnar

EPIC INDIAN



Munnar to Thekkady – Spice Capital of India

85 km · 3 Hours Drive

Thekkady, situated in the Idukku district of Kerala, is known as the spice belt of India. The Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary here is one of India's finest tiger and elephant reserves, set around the beautiful Periyar Lake. The scenic drive from Munnar to Thekkady winds through some of the most breathtaking landscapes in Kerala – passing through cardamom and pepper plantations, misty mountain passes and lush forests.

Morning – Scenic Drive to Thekkady

- Wake up at leisure and enjoy a leisurely breakfast at the hotel with scenic views of Munnar
- Check out from the hotel and begin the scenic 3-hour drive to Thekkady – one of the most beautiful road trips in Kerala
- The drive winds through cardamom and pepper plantations, misty mountain passes and lush forests
- Arrive in Thekkady by late afternoon; check in at the hotel and relax

Evening – Kerala Cookery Classes

- Evening: participate in cookery classes at the resort – master chefs share their skills and secrets of traditional Kerala cooking
- Enter the magical world of Indian spices – learn what they are, how to use them, how to combine them, and savour the special magic they bring to even the most commonplace foods
- Learn to prepare authentic Kerala dishes including fish curry in coconut milk, avial (mixed vegetable curry), and Kerala-style appam with stew
- Enjoy the meal you've helped prepare – a truly immersive culinary experience
- Overnight stay at the hotel in Thekkady

About Thekkady & Periyar

The Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary is one of India's most visited wildlife reserves, covering 925 sq km. The park is home to tigers, elephants, leopards, wild boar, sambar deer, lion-tailed macaques and over 265 species of birds. The artificial Periyar Lake at the heart of the sanctuary was created in 1895 by the British, and today provides a unique opportunity to observe wildlife from a boat.

DAY 11

Thekkady Sightseeing – Spice Plantations & Periyar Lake

Morning – Spice Plantation Tour

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel
- After breakfast, visit the Spice Plantation – Thekkady is known as the spice belt of India and produces many spices including cardamom, pepper, coffee, clove and cinnamon
- Walk through the plantation, see the raw spices and their plants, and learn about the cultivation and processing of each spice
- Interact with plantation workers and learn about the traditional methods of spice farming that have been practised for centuries
- Visit the Kumily Spice Market – the biggest spice market in the country, exporting spices across the globe
- Browse and purchase premium quality spices, essential oils and spice-based products

Afternoon – Periyar Lake Boat Ride

- Postlunch, enjoy the boat ride in Periyar Lake – one of the most scenic wildlife experiences in India
- Watch the cardamom plantation situated near the lake
- Spot various wildlife including Elephants, Monkeys, Deer, Wild Boar and different species of birds during your boating tour
- The lake is surrounded by dense forests and rolling hills – a truly spectacular natural setting
- Return to the hotel by evening and relax

Evening – Optional Activities

- Optional: attend a Kalaripayattu (Kerala's ancient martial art) performance – one of the oldest fighting systems in existence
- Optional: visit the Periyar Tiger Reserve for a guided nature walk with a forest ranger
- Dinner at the hotel
- Overnight stay at the hotel in Thekkady

DAY 12

Thekkady to Alleppey – Overnight Houseboat Cruise

145 km · 3.5 Hours Drive

Kerala's network of navigable backwaters stretches to cover a thousand kilometres. These serene waterways are fringed by palm groves and paddy fields and offer a striking spectacle of rustic life. The backwaters act as a vital waterway for the transport of goods and people – often the only link between isolated villages and crowded towns. Alleppey (Alappuzha) is known as the "Venice of the East" and is one of the most popular areas to cruise the backwaters.

Morning – Departure from Thekkady

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel
- After breakfast, check out from the hotel
- Begin the scenic 3.5-hour drive to Alleppey – passing through rubber plantations, coconut groves and the lush Kerala countryside
- Arrive in Alleppey in time for lunch

Afternoon – Board the Houseboat

- Board your private overnight houseboat cruise – a traditional Kerala kettuvallam (rice boat) converted into a luxury floating home
- The Alleppey district is one of the most popular areas to cruise the backwaters – it is also one of the few places in the world where farming is done below sea level, using a system of dykes
- Cruise through narrow canals, open lakes and serene waterways fringed by coconut palms and paddy fields

Evening & Night – Backwater Life

- Watch the daily life of Kerala's backwater communities – fishermen casting their nets, women washing clothes on the banks, children playing along the shores
- Witness the spectacular sunset over the backwaters – one of the most beautiful sights in Kerala
- All meals are prepared and served onboard by your personal cook – enjoy authentic Kerala cuisine including fresh fish curry, appam, and coconut-based dishes
- Overnight stay onboard the houseboat – fall asleep to the gentle lapping of water

About Kerala's Backwaters

The Kerala backwaters are a chain of brackish lagoons and lakes lying parallel to the Arabian Sea coast. The network includes five large lakes linked by canals, both man-made and natural, fed by 38 rivers, and extending virtually half the length of Kerala. The backwaters were formed by the action of waves and shore currents creating low barrier islands across the mouths of the many rivers flowing down from the Western Ghats.

Alleppey to Cochin – Fort Kochi Heritage Walk

50 km · 1.5 Hours Drive

Cochin (Kochi) is one of the finest natural harbours in the world and has been a major spice trading centre since the 14th century. The city's multi cultural heritage – shaped by Arab traders, Portuguese colonisers, Dutch merchants, Jewish settlers and British administrators – is reflected in its extraordinary mix of mosques, synagogues, churches, temples and colonial buildings. Fort Kochi and Mattan chery are the historic heart of this fascinating city.

Morning – Disembark & Drive to Cochin

- Enjoy breakfast onboard the houseboat – a memorable final morning on the backwaters
- After breakfast, disembark the houseboat and drive to Cochin (1.5 hours)
- Arrive in Cochin in time for lunch; check in at the hotel and relax

Afternoon – Fort Kochi Heritage Walk

- Late afternoon: meet your guide for a Heritage Walk through the Fort Kochi area
- St Francis Church – India's oldest European church, built by the Portuguese Franciscan Friars; Vasco da Gama was originally buried here
- The iconic Chinese Fishing Nets (Cheena Vala) – massive cantilevered fishing nets introduced by Chinese traders from the court of Kublai Khan
- The Nehru Children's Park area and the interesting historic houses that ring the park – Koder House, Tower House, Old Harbor Hotel

Fort Kochi Walk Continued

- Fort Immanuel – the bastion of the Portuguese, one of the oldest surviving Portuguese fortifications in India
- The Dutch Cemetery – now managed by the Church of South India, containing graves of Dutch merchants and officials
- A brief walk past the seaside beach along Bishop's House Road with its beautiful old-style homes
- The Union Club Building – a fine example of colonial architecture
- Santa Cruz Basilica – a magnificent Catholic church originally built by the Portuguese in 1505, one of the eight Basilicas in India
- After dinner, return to the hotel for overnight stay in Cochin

About Fort Kochi

Fort Kochi is a peninsula that juts into the Arabian Sea, forming the western boundary of Cochin harbour. The area was the first European settlement in India, established by the Portuguese in 1503. Today, Fort Kochi is a charming neighbourhood of colonial bungalows, art galleries, boutique hotels and cafes – a living museum of India's colonial past.

DAY 14

Cochin Sightseeing – Mattancherry & Kathakali Performance

Morning – Mattancherry Heritage Walk

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel
- Meet your guide and do a walk through the Mattancherry area to explore the palace road and Fort Kochi area by foot or take a rickshaw ride
- During the walk, witness the multicultural nature of Cochin – different styles of residences, as well as various places of worship of different communities
- Visit the Mattancherry Palace (Dutch Palace) – built by the Portuguese in 1555 and later renovated by the Dutch, featuring remarkable Kerala murals depicting scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata
- Explore the Jewish Quarter (Jew Town) – a fascinating neighbourhood with antique shops, spice warehouses and the historic Paradesi Synagogue (1568), the oldest active synagogue in the Commonwealth

In the late evening, the temples are lit with lamps and the sound of temple bells and chanting makes for a lovely visit

- Return to the hotel and relax

Afternoon & Evening – Kathakali Dance Performance

- After the walk, transfer to the auditorium to witness the Kathakali dance performance at the magnificent Kerala Kathakali Centre
- Extraordinary opportunity to immerse yourself in an authentic Kathakali performance delivered by dedicated artists who have devoted 35 years to their craft
- Arrive early to watch the elaborate make-up process – a fascinating ritual in itself, taking up to 3 hours to complete
- Be captivated by the enthralling spectacle of the artists' make-up, the intricate mudras (hand gestures) they expertly weave, and the dramatic storytelling
- The performance is complemented by live music and soul-stirring singing – an experience that will leave you in awe
- Return to the hotel after dinner
- Overnight stay at the hotel in Cochin

About Kathakali

Kathakali is one of the oldest theatre forms in the world, originating in Kerala in the 17th century. It is a highly stylised classical Indian dance-drama known for its elaborate costumes, detailed make-up and expressive gestures. The word Kathakali means "story play" – each performance tells stories from the great Hindu epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, through a unique combination of dance, music, vocal performance and acting.



DAY 15

Depart Cochin — Farewell South India

Morning — Final Departure

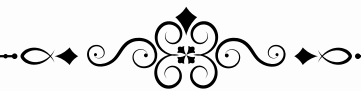
- Enjoy your final breakfast at the hotel in Cochin
- Spend any remaining time exploring the charming streets of Fort Kochi, browsing the spice shops and art galleries, or simply relaxing by the waterfront
- In time, transfer to Cochin International Airport to board your flight for your onward destination
- End of our services — we hope you carry home a lifetime of memories from this extraordinary South India journey

Looking Back—15 Days of South India

Over the past 15 days, you have journeyed through the very soul of South India — from the colonial heritage of Chennai and the French-flavoured streets of Pondicherry, to the ancient temple towns of Kanchipuram, Mahabalipuram, Thanjavur, Trichy and Madurai. You have experienced the unique culture and cuisine of Chettinad, trekked through the emerald hills of Munnar, explored the spice-scented forests of Thekkady, glided through the serene backwaters of Alleppey, and discovered the multicultural magic of Cochin. South India has revealed its many faces — ancient and modern, sacred and secular, wild and serene.

Recommended Extensions

- Mumbai — India's most populous city and financial capital, with colonial architecture, Bollywood culture and vibrant street food
- Goa — For a beach holiday: golden sands, Portuguese heritage, seafood and vibrant nightlife
- Karnataka — Bangalore (Garden City), Mysore (City of Palaces) & Ooty (Queen of Hill Stations)



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01

Send Us an Email

Write to epicindiantravel@gmail.com with your details: number of participants and preferred travel dates

02

Receive Your Itinerary

We'll put together a personalised itinerary tailored to your interests and travel style

03

Customise to Your Needs

Review and let us know any changes – we'll refine it until it's perfect.

04

We Share the Costs

Once finalised, we'll send you a detailed cost breakdown.

05

Confirm and We Book

On your approval, we arrange all hotel bookings and ground arrangements.

06

Advance Deposit

After hotel confirmation, 50% advance deposit of land costs required, plus 100% of flight costs.

07

Balance Payment

Remaining 50% of land costs payable 65 days prior to your holiday.

