



Best of India – Epic Indian Travel

South India Sojourn – Karnataka, Kerala & Tamil Nadu

India's most magnificent multi-state odyssey—journeying through the royal palaces and garden city of Karnataka, the misty hill stations and wildlife sanctuaries of the Nilgiris, and the lush backwaters, spice-scented high lands and ancient temple towns of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. From the cosmopolitan buzz of Bangalore and the regal splendour of Mysore, to the cool heights of Ooty and its legendary Toy Train, these renebackwaters of All eppey, the spice-rich forests of Thekkady, the emerald teagardens of Munnar, the sacred temples of Madurai, the heritage mansions of Chettinad, the French- flavoured streets of Pondicherry, and the colonial grandeur of Chennai—this 22-day journey spans the very soul of South India.

Karnataka's Royal Heritage

Bangalore, Mysore & Ooty – garden city, City of Palaces, Nilgiri Toy Train, Doddabetta Peak & colonial splendour

Kerala's Natural Wonders

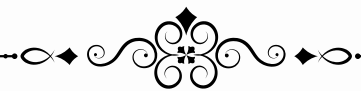
Cochin, Alleppey, Thekkady & Munnar – backwater cruises, spice plantations, Periyar wildlife & Dolmen's Trek

Tamil Nadu's Ancient Soul

Madurai, Chettinad, Pondicherry & Chennai – Dravidian temples, Athangudi tiles, French Quarter & Marina Beach

Tour Route: 21 Nights / 22 Days • Bangalore [2N] – Mysore [2N] – Ooty [2N] – Coimbatore [1N] – Cochin [2N] – Alleppey [1N] – Thekkady [2N] – Munnar [2N] – Madurai [1N] – Chettinad [2N] – Pondicherry [2N] – Chennai [2N]

EPIC INDIAN
— TRAVEL —



Tour Highlights



UNESCO Heritage Sites

Bangalore (Fort St George), Mysore Palace, Mahabalipuram Shore Temple, Kanchipuram temples, Brihadeeswara Temple Thanjavur & Cochin heritage



Nilgiri Toy Train

Iconic heritage steam train journey from Ooty to Mettupalayam through breathtaking mountain scenery & a UNESCO World Heritage railway



Auroville & French Quarter

Full-day visit to Auroville (City of Dawn) & the utopian commune of 50 nations & followed by a heritage walk through Pondicherry's charming French Quarter



Chettinad Culinary Experience

Multi-course traditional meal at The Bangala heritage mansion, visit to Athangudi tile-making units & the weekly Vaara Sabdhai market



Periyar Wildlife & Spice Plantations

Boat ride on Periyar Lake spotting elephants, deer & birds; guided spice plantation tour in Thekkady & the spice belt of India



Alleppey Overnight Houseboat

Cruise Kerala's legendary backwaters on a traditional kettuvallam houseboat & palm-fringed waterways, paddy fields & rustic village life



Dolmen's Trek — Munnar

Early morning soft trek to Marayoor's Neolithic dolmens (3000 BC - 14000 BC) through sandalwood forests & pre-historic rock paintings



Kathakali Dance Performance

Witness the ancient classical dance-drama of Kerala at the Kerala Kathakali Centre & elaborate costumes, intricate mudras & live music



DAY 01

Arrive Bangalore

Bangalore – now officially called Bengaluru – is the capital city of Karnataka and one of India's most dynamic metropolises. Named after the founder of the city, Hiriya Kempegowda, the city is served by the Kempegowda International Airport. Known as the "Garden City of India" for its beautiful parks and tree-lined avenues, Bangalore is also India's Silicon Valley – a thriving hub of technology, innovation and cosmopolitan culture. The city blends its rich historical legacy with a modern, forward-looking spirit.

Arrival & Welcome

- Arrive at Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru – named after the founder of the city, Hiriya Kempegowda
- Complete customs and immigration formalities (approximately one hour)
- Be greeted by our representative just after baggage collection – with a warm flower bouquet and a personalised paging board bearing your name
- Transfer to your hotel by private vehicle, accompanied by our company representative
- Assisted check-in at the hotel
- Overnight stay at the hotel in Bangalore

Evening at Leisure

- Settle into your hotel and freshen up after your journey
- The evening is at leisure – explore the vibrant neighbourhood around your hotel
- Bangalore's MG Road and Brigade Road offer excellent dining, shopping and café culture
- Enjoy a welcome dinner at one of Bangalore's popular restaurants
- Rest and prepare for a full day of sightseeing tomorrow
- Overnight at the hotel in Bangalore

DAY 02

Bangalore Sightseeing

Morning — Garden City Heritage

- Enjoy breakfast at your hotel
- Meet your driver and guide and begin sightseeing in Bangalore — the "Garden City of India"
- Start at Lalbagh Botanical Garden, where founder Kempegowda-II built one of the towers to mark the city boundaries — a beautiful, planned pleasure garden originally laid out by Hyder Ali and expanded by Tipu Sultan
- Drive to Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace — a fine example of Indo-Islamic wooden architecture of the 18th century, adorned with ornate carvings and painted arches
- Visit the Cantonment area — established by the British after the death of Tipu Sultan — including one of the Old Churches, the Bazaar and the historic residential area

Afternoon — Royal Bangalore

- After lunch, visit the Palace of Wodeyars (Bangalore Palace) — modelled on Windsor Castle, this magnificent structure tells the fascinating story of the Wodeyar royal family who ruled Bangalore
- Drive past Vidhana Soudha — the grand seat of Karnataka's state legislature, an imposing neo-Dravidian building established after Indian independence — stop for photographs
- Continue to Cubbon Park, laid out by Lord Cubbon, spread over 300 acres of lush green foliage — home to the Attara Kacheri, Cubbon Park Museum, Sheshadri Iyer Memorial Park and the Bangalore Aquarium (second largest in India)
- Return to the hotel by early evening; freshen up and relax
- Evening dinner at one of Bangalore's popular restaurants
- Overnight at the hotel in Bangalore

EPIC INDIAN
— TRAVEL —

DAY 03

Bangalore to Mysore – City of Palaces

145 km • 3 Hours Drive

Mysore – officially Mysuru – is Karnataka's royal city and one of India's most celebrated heritage destinations. Known as the "City of Palaces", Mysore was the seat of the Wodeyar dynasty for centuries. The city is renowned for its magnificent palaces, vibrant Dasara festival, fragrant sandalwood products, silk sarees and the famous Mysore Pak sweet. En route, the historic town of Srirangapatna – once the capital of Tipu Sultan, the "Tiger of Mysore" – offers a fascinating glimpse into 18th-century Karnataka.

En Route – Srirangapatna

- Enjoy breakfast at your hotel; check out and drive 3 hours to Mysore
- Stop en route at the historic town of Srirangapatna – once the fortified island capital of Tipu Sultan, the Tiger of Mysore
- Visit the Ranganatha Temple – a magnificent Vaishnava temple dedicated to Lord Ranganatha, set on the sacred Kaveri island
- Explore Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace (Daria Daulat Bagh) – a stunning example of Indo-Saracenic architecture with exquisite murals depicting the Battle of Pollilur
- Visit the Jama Masjid (Mosque) – constructed by Tipu Sultan in 1784, one of the finest mosques in Karnataka

Arrive Mysore – Evening Exploration

- Continue drive and arrive in Mysore by late afternoon
- Check in at the hotel and relax
- Evening visit to the Mysore town centre – explore the famous Devaraja Market, a vibrant bazaar overflowing with flowers, spices, incense, silk and local produce
- Stroll through the market lanes and soak in the colours and aromas of this royal city
- Dinner at one of the popular restaurants in Mysore
- Overnight at the hotel in Mysore

DAY 04

Mysore Sightseeing — Palaces, Temples & Art

Morning — Chamundi Hills & Mysore Palace

- Enjoy breakfast at your hotel
- Begin the day with a visit to Chamundi Hill Temple — the sacred hilltop temple of Chamundeshwari, the presiding deity of Mysore and the royal family's patron goddess
- On the way up, see the magnificent large statue of Nandi (the sacred bull), carved from a single rock in 1659 — one of the largest Nandi statues in India
- At the hilltop, see the colourful statue of the mythical demon Mahishasura, after whom the city of Mysore is named
- Enjoy a panoramic bird's-eye view of Mysore city and its surroundings from the Chamundi Hills
- Drive to the magnificent Mysore Palace (Amba Vilas Palace) — one of the most visited monuments in India and the official residence of the Wodeyar Maharajas; the palace is a stunning blend of Hindu, Rajput, Islamic and Gothic architectural styles

Afternoon—Art, Markets & Evening Illumination

- Visit the Jagannathan Palace Art Gallery — once the home of the Mysore Maharajas, this royal building now houses a remarkable collection of paintings by famous Indian and international artists, including works by Raja Ravi Varma
- Post lunch, return to the hotel and rest for the afternoon
- Evening: explore the local market — browse Mysore's famous silk sarees, sandalwood products, incense and handicrafts
- Witness the spectacular illumination of Mysore Palace in the evenings — over 97,000 light bulbs transform the palace into a golden spectacle
- Dinner at a popular restaurant in Mysore
- Overnight at the hotel in Mysore

DAY 05

Mysore to Ooty – Queen of Hill Stations

135 km • 3.5 Hours Hilly Drive

Ooty – officially Udhagamandalam – is the celebrated "Queen of Hill Stations" nestled in the Nilgiri Mountains of Tamil Nadu at an altitude of 2,240 metres above sea level. Once the summer capital of the Madras Presidency under British rule, Ooty is famous for its rolling tea estates, eucalyptus forests, rose gardens and the iconic Nilgiri Mountain Railway – a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The scenic drive from Mysore winds through the Bandipur Tiger Reserve and the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, offering excellent opportunities for wildlife spotting.

Drive to Ooty – Scenic Mountain Road

- Enjoy breakfast at your hotel; check out and begin the 3.5-hour hilly drive to Ooty
- The drive winds through the lush forests of Bandipur National Park and Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary – keep your eyes open for elephants, deer and peacocks along the road
- The road climbs steeply through 36 hairpin bends as you ascend into the Nilgiri Hills – one of the most scenic drives in South India
- Arrive in Ooty by late afternoon; check in at the hotel and rest

Evening in Ooty

- Freshen up and enjoy the cool, crisp mountain air of the Nilgiris
- Evening at leisure – stroll through the charming town centre of Ooty
- Visit the local market for Ooty's famous homemade chocolates, eucalyptus oil, tea varieties and fresh produce
- Dinner at one of the popular restaurants in Ooty – try the local Nilgiri cuisine
- Overnight at the hotel in Ooty

DAY 06

Ooty Sightseeing — Peaks, Gardens & Tea

Morning — Doddabetta Peak & Tea Estate

- Enjoy breakfast at your hotel
- Meet your driver and begin sightseeing in Ooty
- Drive to Doddabetta Peak — at 2,637 metres, it is the highest peak in the Nilgiri Mountains and the second highest in South India; enjoy a bird's-eye view of the lush green Ooty landscape through the telescope at the Telescope House
- Drive to the Tea Estate Viewpoint — the sprawling tea estate houses a museum and working tea factory; taste freshly brewed Nilgiri tea and shop for a variety of teas, chocolates and essential oils from the factory outlet
- Visit the Government Botanical Garden — one of Ooty's must-see attractions, home to over 1,000 species of indigenous and exotic plants and trees, including a fossilised tree trunk believed to be over 20 million years old
- Lunch at Ponmari (Multi Cuisine) or Adyar Ananda Bhavan (South Indian specialist)

Afternoon—Temple, Lake & Evening

- Post lunch, drive to Elk Hill Murugan Temple — perched on a small hill, this temple features a striking statue of Lord Murugan that bears a remarkable resemblance to the famous statue at Batu Caves in Malaysia
- Enjoy the afternoon at Ooty Lake — one of the most popular attractions in Ooty; try boating on the picturesque lake surrounded by eucalyptus trees and rolling hills
- Return to the hotel by evening and relax
- Evening dinner at one of the popular restaurants in Ooty
- Overnight at the hotel in Ooty

EPIC INDIAN
TRAVEL

DAY 07

Ooty to Mettupalayam via Heritage Toy Train — Coimbatore

Toy Train: Ooty → Mettupalayam · 45 km · 1.5 Hours Drive to Coimbatore

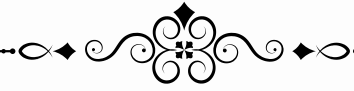
The Nilgiri Mountain Railway 4 popularly known as the Toy Train 4 is one of India's most iconic and romantic rail journeys. Built by the British in 1908, this narrow-gauge steam railway winds its way down the Nilgiri Hills through dense forests, tea estates, tunnels and viaducts. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005 as part of the Mountain Railways of India, the journey from Ooty to Mettupalayam is a breathtaking descent through some of the most spectacular mountain scenery in South India.

The Heritage Toy Train Journey

- Enjoy breakfast at your hotel
- In time, transfer to Ooty Railway Station to board the Heritage Toy Train to Mettupalayam
- Train details: #06137 / Ooty3Mettupalayam Special
- Timings: Departs Ooty (UAM) at 14:00 hrs and arrives Mettupalayam (MTP) at 17:30 hrs
- The train descends through lush forests, tea gardens, tunnels and bridges 4 a truly unforgettable journey
- Note: Your driver will drop you at the station and pick you up at Mettupalayam 4 carry only essential items for the train journey; leave remaining luggage in the vehicle

Arrive Coimbatore

- Meet your driver at Mettupalayam station after the train arrives
- Drive 45 km / 1.5 hours to reach Coimbatore 4 the "Manchester of South India" and a major industrial and textile city
- Check in at the hotel and relax after the day's journey
- Coimbatore is a pleasant city with excellent dining options 4 enjoy dinner at a popular local restaurant
- Overnight at the hotel in Coimbatore



Coimbatore to Cochin – Fort Kochi Heritage Walk

195 km • 4.5 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 explorers, Dutch colonisers and British administrators – is visible in its architecture, cuisine and culture. Fort Kochi, the historic heart of the city, is a charming labyrinth of colonial-era buildings, ancient churches, Chinese fishing nets and vibrant art galleries. Cochin is often called the "Queen of the Arabian Sea".

Drive to Cochin

- Enjoy breakfast at your hotel
- After breakfast, drive 4.5 hours to reach God's Own Country – Kerala
- Arrive in Cochin city by the afternoon; have lunch before or after check-in
- Check in at the hotel and relax after the long drive
- Freshen up and prepare for the afternoon heritage walk

Afternoon – Fort Kochi Heritage Walk

- Late afternoon: meet your guide for a Heritage Walk through the Fort Kochi area
- Visit St Francis Church – India's oldest European church, built by Portuguese Franciscan Friars in 1503; Vasco da Gama was originally buried here
- See the iconic Chinese Fishing Nets (Cheena Vala) – enormous cantilevered fishing nets introduced by traders from the court of Kublai Khan, unique to Cochin
- Walk past the Nehru Children's Park area and the interesting heritage houses – Koder House, Tower House, Old Harbor Hotel
- Visit Fort Immanuel – the bastion of the Portuguese
- See the Dutch Cemetery, now managed by the Church of South India
- Stroll along the breezy seaside promenade on Bishop's House Road, past the Union Club Building and Santa Cruz Basilica
- Dinner and overnight at the hotel in Cochin

EPIC INDIAN
TRAVEL



Cochin Sightseeing – Mattancherry & Kathakali Performance

Morning – Mattancherry Heritage Walk

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel
- Meet your guide and explore the Mattancherry area on foot – walk through the palace road and Fort Kochi area, or take a colourful rickshaw ride through the narrow lanes
- During the walk, witness Cochin's extraordinary multicultural character – different styles of residences, synagogues, mosques, temples and churches standing side by side in remarkable harmony
- Visit the Mattancherry Palace (Dutch Palace) – built by the Portuguese and later renovated by the Dutch, this palace features stunning Kerala murals depicting scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata
- Explore Jew Town – the historic Jewish quarter of Cochin, home to the Paradesi Synagogue (1568), one of the oldest active synagogues in the Commonwealth
- Browse the antique shops and spice merchants along Synagogue Lane
- In the late evening, the temples are lit with lamps and the sound of temple bells and chanting creates a magical atmosphere

Evening – Kathakali Dance Performance

- After the walk, transfer to the auditorium for the magnificent Kathakali dance performance at the Kerala Kathakali Centre
- Kathakali is one of the oldest classical dance-drama forms in the world – a spectacular art form combining elaborate facial makeup, ornate costumes, intricate hand gestures (mudras) and expressive eye movements
- The dedicated artists at the Kerala Kathakali Centre have devoted over 35 years to their craft – their performance is a mesmerising blend of mythology, drama, live music and soul-stirring singing
- Arrive early to watch the fascinating makeup and costume preparation – a ritual in itself
- Return to the hotel after dinner
- Overnight at the hotel in Cochin

DAY 10

Cochin to Alleppey — Overnight Houseboat Cruise

50 km · 1.5 Hours Drive

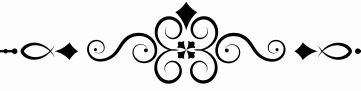
Kerala's network of navigable backwaters stretches to cover a thousand kilometres. These serene waterways are fringed by palm groves and paddy fields and offer a striking spectacle of rustic life. The backwaters act as a vital waterway for the transport of goods, people and their produce — often the only link between isolated villages and crowded towns. The Alleppey (Alappuzha) 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 an ancient system of dykes. Alleppey is often called the "Venice of the East".

Drive to Alleppey & Board Houseboat

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel
- Check out in time and drive 1.5 hours to Alleppey
- Board your traditional Kerala kettuvallam (houseboat) — a beautifully converted rice barge with comfortable bedrooms, a living area, a sun deck and a fully equipped kitchen
- All meals are freshly prepared and served on board by your dedicated crew
- Set sail into the labyrinthine backwater channels — glide past coconut palms, paddy fields, fishing villages and ancient churches

Backwater Cruise Experience

- Watch local life unfold along the banks — fishermen casting their nets, women washing clothes, children playing, and farmers tending their fields
- Pass through narrow canals and open lakes, spotting kingfishers, herons, cormorants and other water birds
- Enjoy a delicious Kerala lunch on board — fresh fish curry, rice, coconut-based vegetables and traditional payasam
- As evening falls, moor at a quiet spot and watch the spectacular sunset over the backwaters
- Enjoy dinner on board and sleep to the gentle lapping of the water
- Overnight on board the houseboat



DAY 11

Alleppey to Thekkady – Spice Capital of India

140 km • 4 Hours Drive

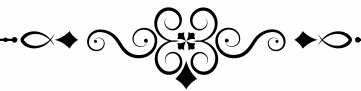
Thekkady, situated in the Idukki district of Kerala, is known as the spice belt of India. The region produces an extraordinary variety of spices – cardamom, pepper, coffee, clove, cinnamon, nutmeg and vanilla – that have attracted traders from around the world for centuries. The Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, one of India's finest tiger and elephant reserves, is centred around the beautiful Periyar Lake. Thekkady is also famous for its traditional Kerala cooking and the optional cookery classes offered at many resorts.

Morning – Disembark & Drive to Thekkady

- Enjoy breakfast on board the houseboat as it glides through the morning backwaters
- Disembark the houseboat and meet your driver for the 4-hour drive to Thekkady
- The drive climbs through the Western Ghats – a scenic journey through rubber plantations, spice gardens and mountain forests
- Arrive in Thekkady by late afternoon; check in at the hotel and relax

Evening – Cookery Class at the Resort

- Evening: participate in the optional cookery class at the resort – master chefs share the secrets of traditional Kerala cooking
- Learn about the magical world of Indian spices – what they are, how to use them, how to combine them and how to savour the special magic they bring to even the most commonplace foods
- Discover the art of making Kerala classics such as fish molee, avial, puttu and payasam
- Stroll through the resort's spice garden in the evening – identify cardamom, pepper, clove and cinnamon plants
- Dinner at the hotel
- Overnight at the hotel in Thekkady



DAY 12

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 with a knowledgeable guide – see the raw spices growing on their plants and learn about the cultivation, harvesting and processing of each spice
- Visit the Kumily Spice Market – the biggest spice market in the country, which exports spices across the globe; browse and purchase authentic spices, essential oils and herbal products
- Lunch at a local restaurant in Kumily

Afternoon – Periyar Lake Wildlife Boat Ride

- Post lunch, enjoy the boat ride on Periyar Lake – the centrepiece of the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, one of India's finest tiger and elephant reserves
- The lake was formed by the Mullaperiyar Dam in 1895 and is surrounded by dense tropical forests
- Watch the cardamom plantation situated near the lake shore
- Spot various wildlife during the boat ride – elephants coming to the water's edge, sambar deer, wild boar, Malabar giant squirrels, langur monkeys and a rich variety of birds including the Malabar pied hornbill and the great Indian hornbill
- Return to the hotel by evening
- Overnight at the hotel in Thekkady

EPIC INDIAN
TRAVEL

DAY 13

Thekkady to Munnar – Queen of Kerala Hill Stations

100 km · 4 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 the Eravikulam National Park, the Anamudi Peak (the highest peak in South India at 2,695 metres), and the rare Neelakurinji flower that blooms once every 12 years, turning the hillsides blue. 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.

Drive to Munnar

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel; check out and begin the 4-hour scenic drive to Munnar
- The drive is one of the most beautiful road trips in Kerala – winding through rubber plantations, cardamom estates and dense mountain forests
- Arrive in Munnar in time for lunch; check in at the hotel and rest

Afternoon – Mattupetty Dam & Evening

- Late afternoon: visit the Mattupetty Dam – more than just a water storage facility, the reservoir (Mattupetty Lake) is a perennial lake that never dries up even in summer
- The lake is popular with birds and wild animals that rely on this reservoir; enjoy the serene views of the surrounding tea-covered hills
- Return to the hotel by evening and relax
- Indulge in activities organised by the hotel if you wish
- Dinner at the hotel
- Overnight at the hotel in Munnar

EPIC INDIAN
TRAVEL

DAY 14

Munnar Sightseeing – Dolmen's Trek & Tea Plantations

Early Morning – Dolmen's Trek (Marayoor)

- Early morning: embark on the soft Dolmen's Trek to Marayoor 4 suitable for all age groups and fitness levels
- The dolmens of Marayoor belong mostly to the Neolithic Age (3000 BC-14000 BC) 4 these above-ground burial chambers are fascinating to historians, archaeologists and visitors alike
- A drive and trek reveal around 15 different types of dolmens dating back to the Neolithic as well as the Iron Age 4 the dolmens of Munnar are different from those found in Europe
- The area is also known for its natural sandalwood forests, pre-historic cave paintings and flocks of Blue Glassy Tiger Butterflies perched atop fresh lemongrass
- Return to the hotel and enjoy breakfast

Morning & Afternoon – Tea Plantations & Factory

- Visit the Tea Plantations 4 walkthrough the rolling tea gardens and interact with tea pluckers to learn about the local culture and the art of tea harvesting; this walk is excellent for health 4 breathing pure mountain oxygen and finding peace of mind
- Visit the Tea Factory 4 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 detailed briefing about the origins of tea, its history, health benefits and traditional manufacturing processes 4 followed by tea tasting in the factory
- Afternoon: enjoy optional activities arranged by the resort
- Dinner at the hotel
- Overnight at the hotel in Munnar

EPIC INDIAN
TRAVEL

Munnar to Madurai – City of the Meenakshi Temple

160 km · 4 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" and the "City That Never Sleeps", Madurai has been a centre of Tamil learning, culture and commerce for over 2,500 years. The city is dominated by the magnificent Meenakshi Amman Temple – one of the greatest examples of Dravidian architecture in the world, with its towering gopurams (gateway towers) adorned with thousands of painted sculptures. Madurai is also famous for its vibrant street food scene, jasmine flowers and the Thirumalai Nayakar Palace.

Drive to Madurai & Afternoon Heritage Walk

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel; check out and drive 4 hours to Madurai
- Arrive in Madurai in time for lunch; check in at the hotel and relax
- Late afternoon: begin a Heritage Walk through the temple town
- Start at the East Tower of the Meenakshi Amman Temple – explore the marvellous Dravidian architecture, the legends of the goddess Meenakshi and her consort Lord Sundareswarar
- Experience the temple rituals, see the sacred water tank (Porthamarai Kulam) and the grand 1,000-Pillar Hall – a masterpiece of Vijayanagara architecture

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, the main hall and the dance hall of this 17th-century Nayaka palace
- After the walk, taste Madurai's legendary street food delights – the city is as famous for its food as for its temples; try the iconic Jigarthanda, Kari Dosa and Madurai Mutton Biryani
- Return to the hotel for an overnight stay in Madurai

DAY 16

Madurai to Chettinad – Land of Mansions & Cuisine

100 km • 2 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 they built in a mix of Indian and European styles, using materials imported from around the world – Burmese teak, Italian marble, Belgian glass and Chinese tiles. 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 sarees.

Drive to Chettinad & Afternoon Arrival

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel; check out and drive 2 hours to Chettinad
- Arrive in Chettinad by the afternoon; check in at the heritage mansion hotel and relax
- The Chettinad mansions are extraordinary – vast, labyrinthine structures with ornate wooden pillars, antique furniture, Belgian glass windows and Italian marble floors
- Take a leisurely walk around the mansion and its grounds to absorb the unique atmosphere

Evening – Vaara Sabdhai Market & Classical Music

- Evening: visit the weekly market called "Vaara Sabdhai" – a vibrant open-air market where greengrocers, fisherfolk and fruit vendors display their wares under colourful canopies
- Browse the stalls for fresh local produce, traditional snacks and Chettinad specialities
- Later in the evening, enjoy a classical music concert as an accompaniment to your dinner – a traditional Chettinad cultural experience
- Overnight at the Mansion in Chettinad

DAY 17

Chettinad Sightseeing – Tiles, Mansions & Markets

Morning – Athangudi & Heritage Villages

- Enjoy breakfast at the Mansion
- 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 even today entirely handmade using natural pigments and local sand
- Watch the skilled artisans at work – each tile is a unique piece of art, and you can purchase tiles and pottery directly from the craftsmen
- From Athangudi, drive 30 minutes to visit Thirumayam Fort – built in the 17th century, this fort has been the site of several battles and intrigues; it features a rock-cut cave temple and a hilltop fort with panoramic views
- Visit the small town of Kanadukathan – famous for its grand old-style mansions with elaborate woodwork, terracotta and tile work

Afternoon – The Bangala Lunch & Antiques Market

- Lunch at The Bangala in Karaikudi – a multi-course traditional Chettinad meal at this legendary heritage residence, now converted into a boutique hotel; the meal is a feast of authentic Chettinad flavours – spicy curries, rice, chutneys and traditional sweets
- After lunch, visit the antiques market in Karaikudi – browse for Chettinad antiques, old furniture, bronze idols, vintage tiles and collectibles
- Visit the local weaving units which produce the famous Chettinad weaves – distinctive handloom cotton sarees with bold geometric patterns
- Return to the Mansion and relax for the day
- Overnight at the Mansion in Chettinad



Chettinad to Pondicherry – via Trichy & Thanjavur

290 km • 5.5 Hours Drive

Today's journey passes through two of Tamil Nadu's most important temple cities – Trichy and Thanjavur – before arriving in the charming Franco-Tamil town of Pondicherry. Trichy (Tiruchirappalli) is famous for the dramatic Rock Fort Temple perched atop a 83-metre-high rock, and the magnificent Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple – one of the largest temple complexes in the world. Thanjavur (Tanjore) was the capital of the great Chola Empire and is home to the Brihadeeswara Temple – a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the greatest achievements of South Indian architecture.

Morning – Trichy & Thanjavur Temples

- After an early breakfast at the Mansion, check out and begin the drive to Pondicherry
- Stop in Trichy to visit The Rock Fort Temple (Ucchi Pillayar Temple) – climb the 437 steps carved into the ancient rock for spectacular views of the city and the Kaveri River
- Visit Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam – one of the largest functioning Hindu temples in the world, covering 156 acres with 21 gopurams; the temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu reclining on the serpent Adishesha
- Drive 1 hour to Thanjavur; visit the Brihadeeswara Temple (Big Temple) – built by the great Chola king Raja Raja I in 1010 AD; the vimana (tower) rises to 66 metres and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Also visit the Thanjavur Palace and Art Gallery – home to a superb collection of Chola bronzes

Afternoon – Drive to Pondicherry

- Post lunch, continue the drive to Pondicherry
- Arrive in Pondicherry by early evening; check in at the hotel
- 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
- Retire for the day; overnight at the hotel in Pondicherry



Pondicherry Sightseeing – Auroville & French Quarter

Full Day – Auroville (City of Dawn)

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel
- Full day visit to Auroville 4 an experimental commune made up of people from over 50 countries, aiming to be an ideal society where people can live and work irrespective of creed and nationality
- Your guide is a local Aurovillean who will give you an insider's view of its history, economy, decision-making processes, ecology and technology
- Start with delicious goodies at the Auroville Bakery, then head to the Visitors Centre 4 see how the community turned hundreds of hectares of barren land into lush forests
- Visit several workshops and projects: the Wellpaper unit (women's empowerment initiative), musical instrument workshop, indigo dyeing workshop, bamboo experiment centre and organic farming units
- Lunch at Auroville's Solar Kitchen 4 see the huge solar panels and learn how Auroville meets its energy needs through renewable sources
- See the grand Matrimandir (Mother's Temple) 4 a stunning golden sphere that is an architectural marvel and the spiritual heart of Auroville
- Return to the hotel by late afternoon

Evening – French Quarter Heritage Walk

- Late evening: Heritage Walk through Pondicherry's historic French Quarter
- Begin at Sri Aurobindo Ashram 4 a peaceful spiritual centre that was home to the renowned philosopher and yogi Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950)
- Walk through the pleasant streets of the French Quarter past handsome houses in sunny colours and stately government buildings 4 Raj Nivas and the Pondicherry Legislative Assembly
- Stroll through the leafy Bharathi Park, dotted with statues and sculptures 4 the nucleus around which the French town developed
- Walk past the Eglise de Notre Dame des Agnes (Notre Dame Church) and along the breezy seaside Promenade
- Optional: visit the Pondicherry Museum and the Manakula Vinayagar Temple to receive a blessing from the temple elephant
- Return to the hotel; overnight in Pondicherry

DAY 20

Pondicherry to Chennai – via Kanchipuram & Mahabalipuram

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, especially after it became the capital city in the 6th century AD. Kanchipuram is also famous for its exquisite handloom silk textiles – the Kanchipuram silk saree is one of the most prized in India. Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram) was the seaport and trading centre of the Pallava kingdom. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with stunning ruins and grand open-air sculptures by the seashore.

Morning – Kanchipuram

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel; at 8:00 am, meet your driver for a day excursion en route to Chennai
- In Kanchipuram, visit Ekambareswar Temple – a massive temple complex dedicated to Lord Shiva, that gets its name from an ancient mango tree living within its boundaries; one of the Pancha Bhuta Stalas representing the element of Earth
- Visit Kamakshi Amman Temple – a magnificent temple dedicated to the goddess Kamakshi, the chief deity of Kanchipuram and one of the three most sacred Shakti shrines in India
- Tour a silk loom workshop – watch the intricate process of weaving Kanchipuram's world-famous silk sarees, with their distinctive zari borders and rich colours

Afternoon – Mahabalipuram & Arrive Chennai

- Drive to Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram) – a UNESCO World Heritage Site on the Coromandel Coast
- Visit the Shore Temple – one of the oldest structural stone temples in South India, built by the Pallava king Narasimhavarman II in the 8th century; it stands dramatically at the water's edge
- See Arjuna's Penance – one of the largest open-air rock reliefs in the world, depicting scenes from the Mahabharata carved on two massive boulders
- Visit Pancha Rathas (Five Chariots) – five monolithic pyramid structures, each carved from a single piece of granite, representing different styles of Dravidian temple architecture
- Continue drive to Chennai; arrive at the hotel by late evening
- Overnight at the hotel in Chennai

DAY 21

Chennai Sightseeing – Marina, Fort & Mylapore

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 bought a piece of land from the King of Vijayanagar near a fishing village to build Fort St George – the first fortress of British power in India, now the Secretariat complex of the Government of Tamil Nadu. Chennai's Marina Beach is the longest natural urban beach in India and the second longest in the world.

Morning – Colonial Heritage Trail

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel
- Meet your guide and driver for the city tour of Chennai, covering the city's major must-sees
- Begin with a visit to San Thome Basilica – Chennai's famous basilica built over the tomb of the Apostle St Thomas, who is believed to have been martyred in Chennai in 72 AD
- Drive through the old fishing villages along the beach to get a sense of how the city looked in its early days
- Visit the popular Lighthouse for excellent panoramic views of the city and the sea
- Walk through the historic Fort St George – the first fortress of British power in India; visit St Mary's Church (the oldest surviving British church in India), where Robert Clive was married in 1753 and Elihu Yale (founder of Yale University) served as an early governor
- Visit the Fort Museum – an interesting collection of objects from the tenure of the East India Company in Chennai

Afternoon – Marina Promenade & Mylapore Walk

- See various public buildings and sculptures along the Marina Promenade – Police Headquarters, Queen Mary's College, Lady Wellington College, Presidency College, University of Madras, Napier Bridge and the War Memorial
- Spend time relaxing on Marina Beach – the longest natural urban beach in India – enjoying the local life and colourful stalls
- Return to the hotel by late afternoon
- Evening: walk through the Mylapore area – the religious and cultural epicentre of the Tamil people
- Visit the Kapaleeswara Temple – a fine example of pure Dravidian style with gopurams and mandapams, rebuilt 300 years ago on the site of an ancient shore temple
- Walk through the surrounding bazaars – jewellers, silk merchants, fruit and vegetable sellers and flower vendors provide a colourful backdrop; end the tour at the popular Saravana Bhavan for snacks and coffee
- Return to the hotel; overnight in Chennai

DAY 22

Depart Chennai — Farewell South India

Morning — Final Departure

- Enjoy your final breakfast at the hotel in Chennai
- Spend any remaining time exploring the charming streets of Mylapore or browsing the local markets for last-minute souvenirs — Kanchipuram silk sarees, bronze idols, sandalwood products, spices and handloom textiles make wonderful gifts
- In time, transfer to Chennai International Airport for your onward flight
- End of Services

Memories to Carry Home

- 22 days of extraordinary experiences across three magnificent states — Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu
- Royal palaces and garden cities of Bangalore and Mysore
- The legendary Nilgiri Toy Train through mountain mist
- Serene backwater cruises and spice-scented forests of Kerala
- Ancient Dravidian temples, Chettinad mansions and the French Quarter of Pondicherry
- The warmth of South India's people, the richness of its cuisine and the depth of its culture — memories that will last a lifetime
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Confirm and We Book
On your approval, we arrange all hotel bookings and ground arrangements.</p> | <p>06
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| <p>07
Balance Payment
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