



TRAVELLING TO NEW PLACES WITH CONFIDENCE

India: Great Wonders of the South

13-Day, 12-Night Journey

Chennai, Mylapore, Pondicherry, Thanjavur, Karaikudi, Madurai, Munnar, Cochin

This trip is designed for travelers interested in exploring southern Indian culture. Discover the best places to visit, from the golden beaches of Goa to Kerala's palm-fringed backwaters. Absorb the more calm, grounded, joyful and welcoming atmosphere as you experience southern hospitality as warm as the Indian summers themselves.

Stroll on the sunny coast of the Arabian Sea and relax on a Backwaters houseboat boat cruise. Feast your eyes on varieties of ancient temples ranging from carved rock, rainbow colored stucco to skyscraper temple towers. Excite your taste buds with French-Tamil fusion food and Chettinad cuisine cooking demonstrations on the Tea and Spices trail. You'll be amazed of the diversity of India culture, it's a true eye-opening experience for all.

♦ Customizable Private Tour

Trip Overview (*UNESCO World Heritage Sites)

- ▶ Peacock Trail
- ▶ Kapaleeshwarar Temple
- ▶ Marina Beach
- ▶ Welcome Dinner with Dance Performance
- ▶ **The Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram***
- ▶ Pondicherry City Tour
- ▶ French quarter
- ▶ Sri Aurobindo Ashram
- ▶ Pondicherry Government Park

- ▶ Gandhi Memorial
- ▶ French-Tamil Cooking Demo
- ▶ Silk Weavers' Colony
- ▶ Brihadeeswara Temple
- ▶ Thanjavur Palace
- ▶ Saraswati Mahal Library
- ▶ Art Gallery in Thanjavur
- ▶ Chettinad Cooking Demo
- ▶ Trichy City Tour
- ▶ Meenakshi Amman Temple
- ▶ Munnar Hill Station
- ▶ Tea Plantation Tour
- ▶ Tea Museum Tour
- ▶ Kudla Dam Walk
- ▶ Echo Point Walk
- ▶ Cochin City Tour
- ▶ Mattancherry
- ▶ Antique & Spice Markets
- ▶ Fort Cochin
- ▶ Chinese Fishing Nets
- ▶ Synagogue at Jewish Quarter
- ▶ Kathakali Dance Performance
- ▶ Private Houseboat Lunch Cruise

Why You'll Love This Tour



ANCIENT SKYSCRAPER TEMPLES

South India built towering multi-story temple towers centuries before other cultures. See the granddaddy of all Dravidian temples, the Meenakshi Amman temple which boasts 12 towers with the tallest at 170 feet.



A DREAMY LANDSCAPE

Unlike the hectic tourist epicenters of Jaipur and Delhi, relaxation practically oozes out of Kerala. As your boat glides along the backwaters, watch the farmers work on rice paddy fields, housewives washing laundry while coconut palms wave under a warm breeze.



LUSH GREEN KERALA MOUNTAINS

Ascend up to the tea plantations in Munnar hill station for lush green estates that give off a vantage point from where one can drink in views of the neighboring valleys, mountains, and villages. The tranquil beauty of nature is punctuated by signs of women plucking buds and leaves from the green tea gardens, otherwise known as tea plantations.

Inclusions

- ▶ Airport Transfers, Meet and Greet
- ▶ Hotel Accommodations
- ▶ Daily Breakfast & Selected Meals
(See tour plan for details)
- ▶ English-speaking Local Guide
- ▶ Entrance Fees to Monuments and Attractions per Itinerary

Exclusions

- ▶ Air Fare
- ▶ Travel Insurance
- ▶ Medical Expenses
- ▶ Visa Fee
- ▶ Gratuity
- ▶ Personal Expenses

Nearby Airport

Chennai International Airport (MAA)

Cochin International Airport (COK)

Itinerary

(B)-Breakfast, (L)-Lunch, (D)-Dinner

DAY 1: MEET UP AT CHENNAI (MAA)

Upon arrival at Chennai airport, you'll be met and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the day is free for you to explore this capital city of Tamil Nadu state on your own.

DAY 2: CHENNAI | MYLAPORE PEACOCK TRAIL (B, D)

Let's take the **Peacock Trail** through **Mylapore**, a town that predates Chennai by at least 2,000 years and is the religious and cultural epicenter of the Tamil people. Visit the **Kapaleeshwarar Temple**, re-built 300 years ago, which is a fine example of the pure Dravidian style with gopurams and mandapams.

Marina Beach is 4 miles long on the Bay of Bengal, one of the longest beaches in the world. Near the north of Marina Beach is Fort St George which was the first English fortress in India. The fort also houses St Mary's Church, it is the oldest Anglican church and the oldest British building in India.

This evening, enjoy a local dance performance with your **welcome dinner**.



DAY 3: CHENNAI – PONDICHERRY (PUDUCHERRY) | MAHABALIPURAM, KANCHIPURAM (B, D)

Mahabalipuram is a small seaside village and once the main port of the Pallava Dynasty from the 5th to 9th centuries. **The Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram** has been classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site that was carved out of rock during the 7th and 8th centuries. See the famous **Descent of the Ganges**, and the **Shore Temple** with thousands of sculptures dedicated to the glory of God Shiva.

Afterwards you continue by road to Pondicherry.

DAY 4: PONDICHERRY (PUDUCHERRY) | PONDICHERRY CITY TOUR, COOKING DEMO (B, D)

Today you visit a **local village** to observe their traditions and daily life.

In 1674, **Pondicherry** became a French colony. Experience the French colonial atmosphere in Puducherry, visit the **French quarter** and the famous **Sri Aurobindo Ashram** (an ashram is akin to a monastery), founded by one of India's greatest philosopher-poets. Other attractions are the lush **Government Park** and elegant **Gandhi Memorial**. Enjoy a **French-Tamil cuisine cooking demonstration** at your hotel. Think French seafood with sauces infused with mild Indian spices.

DAY 5: PONDICHERRY– THANJAVUR | SILK WEAVERS' COLONY (B, D)

Visit Thanjavur which is a major silk center and watch traditional weaving at the **silk weavers' colony**. Some of the silk sarees are embroidered with gold and silver thread. See Indian **Tie & Dye** techniques from 5000 years ago.

DAY 6: THANJAVUR | BRIHADEESWARA TEMPLE, COOKING DEMONSTRATION (B, D)

Thanjavur thrived as the ancient capital of the Chola kingdom. The great **Brihadeeswara (Brahadeeswara) Temple** in Dravidian architecture is one of the most magnificent examples of south Indian temple architecture. To explore more about Chola artifacts, we'll visit the **Thanjavur Palace, Saraswati Mahal library** and the **art gallery**. The art gallery hosts an excellent collection of Chola bronzes and stone carvings. Enjoy an introduction to the Thanjavur style of paintings.

Enjoy your **Chettinad cooking demonstration** with a wide range of spices at the hotel.

DAY 7: THANJAVUR – KARAİKUDI | TRICHY CITY TOUR (B, D)

Drive from Thanjavur to Karaikudi to visit **Trichy** that was a capital of the early Cholas in the 3rd century BC. It has passed through the hands of many rulers including the British. It is known for the famous 17th century Rock Fort Temple.

DAY 8: KARAIKUDI – MADURAI | MEENAKSHI TEMPLE (B, D)

Madurai is one of the oldest cities in India, a metropolis that traded with ancient Rome. It's celebrated **Meenakshi Amman Temple** is one of India's greatest temples with a dazzling maze-like structure. Meenakshi Temple with its nine gopurams (temple towers) soaring to almost 164 feet above the gateways, is decorated with colorful stucco images of gods, goddesses and animals. The incredible thousand-pillared hall and the Golden Lotus tank are must-see attractions!

DAY 9: MADURAI - MUNNAR (B, D)

Drive to **Munnar**, the hill station 6,000 ft above sea level that is the home to many tea plantations. These tea plantations were the British Raj's solution to Chinese tea monopoly in the 1800s. With its cooler weather, the fog often wafts over the mountains. The tranquil beauty of nature is punctuated by signs of women plucking buds and leaves from the green tea gardens (tea plantations).

DAY 10: MUNNAR | TEA PLANTATION, TEA MUSEUM, KUDLA DAM, ECHO POINT (B, D)

Today, you'll stroll through a working **tea plantation**. Depending on the time of the year, you may be able to see the colorful tea pluckers at work and visit the factory to observe the Tea making process - crush, tear, curl. Then visit the interesting **Kannan Devan Tea Museum** with machines, photographs, classic bungalow furniture and office equipment of the Colonial era.

Other attractions are **Kudla Dam, Echo Point** and a gentle hike through the lush landscape.

DAY 11: MUNNAR - COCHIN | COCHIN CITY TOUR, KATHAKALI DANCE PERFORMANCE (B, D)

We drive to **Cochin** today. Serene Cochin is a melting pot of medieval Portuguese and Dutch heritage mixed with an English village grafted onto the tropical Malabar Coast. You will visit the historical towns of **Fort Cochin** and **Mattancherry**, the **spice markets, antique shopping market, synagogue** and the famous **Chinese fishing nets**.

Enjoy a performance of famous **Kathakali dance** demonstrating an ancient ritual that plays an important role in Kerala's cultural life.

DAY 12: COCHIN | ALLEPPEY HOUSEBOAT LUNCH CRUISE (B, L, D)

For the greatest pleasure in Kerala, let's enjoy a private **houseboat cruise** and lunch on the backwaters to Alleppey. A never-to-miss experience cruising slowly through a maze of canals observing scenes of everyday life in villages, paddy fields, and see coconut palms, fishermen and locals on a typical day. Then back to Cochin for your dinner.

DAY 13: DEPART COCHIN (B)

The tour comes to an end after breakfast. Hotel check-out and transfer to Cochin International Airport (COK) for your flight home.

Bon voyage from God's Country!

Hotels

We carefully handpick our hotels to ensure they provide you with the best comfort and experience. For Private Tours, you may request a specific hotel as one of the customizable options.

