



Itinerary

11 Day South India & Kerala Backwaters

***IMPORTANT NOTE:** Any extra nights, optional tours or other amendments, will not be visible on this itinerary.

DAY 1: Arrive Chennai

Your Holiday to India starts now! On your arrival in Chennai, our Executive will welcome you at the airport and introduce our driver to you. Then you will be transferred to your hotel and relax. The rest of the day is at your own leisure.

Note: Generally the check in time at the hotels is 12 pm

MEALS: None

OVERNIGHT: 3 or 4 Star hotel in Chennai

DAY 2: Chennai ~ Mahabalipuram (1 ½ hrs drive)

After breakfast drive to Mahabalipuram which is known as an open air museum or the poetry in Stone. On arrival, check in at your hotel and relax. Later on we explore Mahabalipuram. Visit Five Rathas, where each of the five temples are created in a different style but resemble chariots. Arjuna's Penance, The world's largest bas carving and it's wonderful depictions of Hindu mythology. The huge whaleback shaped rock contains figures of Gods, Demigods, men, beasts, birds and in fact represents creation. Also visit Ganesh Ratha; a shrine to Ganesh the elephant god and nearby is Krishna's butter ball, a huge boulder that does not move but seems to balance quite precariously. The Mandapas which are also nearby and scattered over the main hill are amongst the earliest of the rock cut temples. Then spend some time at the Sculpture Museum which contains more than 3000 local sculptures and also exhibits some fine paintings.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: 3 or 4 Star hotel in Mahabalipuram.

DAY 3: Mahabalipuram ~ Pondicherry (2 hours drive)

Today a short drive to Pondicherry - the former French colony. On arrival, check in at your hotel and relax. In the afternoon we take a city tour around Pondicherry to take a look at the old French colonial architecture and sights such as the Vinayagar temple, built prior to 15th Century A.D and dedicated to Lord Ganesh and the Aurobindo Ashram, Sacred Heart Jesus Church. In the evening stroll along the beach pathway and check out some local shopping.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: 3 or 4 Star hotel in Pondicherry

DAY 4: Pondicherry ~ Chidambaram ~ Kumbakonam (4-5 hrs drive)

After early breakfast drive to Chidambaram – an important pilgrim centre for the Hindus and it represents one of the five elements - Sky. Chidambaram is also called as the land of cosmic dancer. It is dedicated to Lord Nataraja (Shiva) built by the Cholas. It is one of the rarest temples of Lord Shiva and it is represented by an idol rather than the customary Lingam. Later drive to Kumbakonam, one of the oldest towns in Tamilnadu and is known as "Temple Town". The town is famous for brass vessels especially lamps, Silks, Panchaloga (5 metals) idols & Betel leaves. Dozens of temples are scattered around the town and this is a good base to visit the Chola temples nearby. We will take you to visit the Airavatheeswarar Temple, a storehouse of art and architecture recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Monument as well as bronze and silk weaving factories.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: 3 or 4 Star hotel in Kumbakonam

DAY 5: Kumbakonam ~ Tanjore ~ Madurai (5 hours drive)

Today morning drive to Tanjore - the Rice Bowl of Tamilnadu. Tanjore is an important centre for South Indian art and architecture. Most of the living Chola temples and UNESCO world heritage monument are located in and around Tanjore. Tanjore is also the home of the Tanjore painting, a unique style of this region. Tanjore was at height of its glory during King Raja Raja Chola. Visit Brahadeeshwar temple aka "Big Temple", which was built by King Raja Raja Chola. It is an architect's marvel & it is one of the UNESCO world heritage sites. Later visit to Art gallery and palace. Then drive to Madurai. On arrival, check in at your hotel and relax.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: 3 or 4 Star hotel in Madurai

DAY 6: Madurai

Madurai is one of the most ancient cities in India and it is situated on the bank of river Vaigai. Madurai has a rich cultural heritage passed on from the great Tamil era more than 2500 years old. Madurai has a rich historical background in the sense that Lord Shiva himself performed sixty-four wonders called "Thiruvilaiyadals". It was the capital city for the great Pandya kings. Visit Meenakshi Amman temple which has fabulous art & architecture. A striking feature of this temple is the astonishing structure known as "Aayiramkall Mandapam" meaning 1000 pillared hall. Then visit to Thirumalai Naicker Mahal and Vandiyur Mariamman tank.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: 3 or 4 Star hotel in Madurai

DAY 7: Madurai ~ Periyar National Park (3 ½ hrs drive)

From the Rice Bowl to the Spice Bowl. After breakfast drive to Periyar - the spice bowl of Kerala. Periyar is famous for its wildlife sanctuary and for a large variety of spices found here. On reaching there, check into the hotel and then proceed for the boat ride (not included) on Periyar lake, where you may be able to see elephants, deer, wild boar, bison, etc.

Then you have the option of a tour around a spice plantation (not included) -The fertile soils and warm, wet climate of Kerala make it one of the world's premier spice-producing regions. Many of the condiments

we add to our food have their origins here and it is a fascinating experience to see such staples as cardamom, pepper, vanilla and nutmeg growing in a spice garden near Periyar. A guided walk around one of these Spice gardens will give visitors an insight into the history of the spice trade, as well as the many uses of these health-giving plants in traditional and modern medicine as well as their more well-known culinary uses.

Later in the evening watch & enjoy the Kalaripayattu show -martial art of Kerala (not included).

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: 3 or 4 Star hotel in Periyar National Park (Thekkady)

DAY 8: Periyar ~ Alleppey (4-5 hours drive)

This is what you've been waiting for! After early breakfast drive to Alleppey - known as the Venice of the East- famous for the backwaters and houseboats. You can embark your deluxe houseboat at around 12.30/1pm. While cruising from Alleppey to Alleppey, you will pass through the beautiful canals, lagoons and can watch the day to day activities of local people. Your crew will prepare the delicious Keralian meal on board the houseboat. At the time of sunset (approx 5.00pm), the houseboat will be anchored at a jetty where you will stay overnight. Enjoy the serenity of the backwaters as you relax on the deck watching the sun go down.

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

OVERNIGHT: Deluxe Houseboat

DAY 9: Alleppey ~ Cochin (2 hours drive)

Continue cruising along for a couple of hours and then after breakfast, disembark the houseboat and you will be met by your driver at the boat jetty. We then drive to Cochin, on arrival check in at your hotel and relax.

Today you have an opportunity to take "Ayurvedic Body Massage" (not included) at your hotel which is something special in Kerala. Rest of the day free for your own activities.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: 3 or 4 Star hotel in Cochin

DAY 10: Cochin

Cochin is known as "The Queen of Arabian Sea" and today we will explore it so you will find out why. First explore the Cochin Fort, which has been in the hands of the Dutch, British, Portuguese and Chinese, with each having influenced the history and appearance of the Fort area in subtle yet unmistakable ways. Visit to Dutch Palace (closed on Fridays), Jewish Synagogue (closed on Fridays & Saturdays), Santa Cruz Basilica, and the very picturesque Chinese Fishing nets. After visit the spice market if you wish. With virtually no traffic the spice market is the perfect place to explore by foot. Later in the evening attend a Kathakali dance (not included) performance, where heavily made up and elaborately dressed artists play out the Hindu epics.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: 3 or 4 Star hotel in Cochin

DAY 11: End of Tour

Unfortunately your Holiday2India has come to an end. After breakfast your driver will transfer you to the airport in time for your onward flight.