

Best of South India
11 days – 10 nights
Kochi, Alleppey, Kerala Houseboat, Kumarakom, Periyar, Madurai, Chennai, Mahabalipuram
Culture, History, Spirituality, Relaxation

Day 01: Kochi

Arrival in Kochi, you will be met and assisted by our representative at the airport and transferred to your hotel. Kochi is the major port city on the west coast of India by the Arabian Sea. The city of Kochi is Kerala's second largest city. Heralded as the Queen of Arabian Sea, Kochi was an important spice-trading Centre on the Arabian Sea coast from the 14th century. Occupied by the Portuguese Empire in 1503, Kochi was the first of the European colonies in India. It remained the main seat of Portuguese India until 1530, when Goa was chosen instead. The Dutch and the British later occupied the city and the Kingdom of Kochi became a princely state. Depending on time of arrival we may schedule a half day sightseeing tour.

Day 02: Kochi

This morning you will be driven to Kumbalanghi, lush green village of Kochi with its own tradition and culture, declared the first model fisheries and tourism village of India. Most of the villagers are engaged in agriculture and fishing. The village is 4,000 acres in area and surrounded by backwaters and paddy fields. Experience activities at village: Visit to crab farm, watch coir yarn making, visit an agriculture farm and see different types of plantation, water harvesting ponds, biogas plants and Chinese fishing nets. In the afternoon enjoy the sightseeing of Fort Kochi area visiting the Dutch Palace or Mattancherry palace (closed on Fridays) is one of the oldest examples of the Portuguese architecture with oriental influence and is unique from the historical and architectural point of view, Jewish synagogue (closed on Fridays and Saturdays) the oldest active synagogue in the British Commonwealth built in 1568 by the Malabar Yehudan people or Kochi Jewish community in the Kingdom of Kochi. In the evening you will witness a "Kathakali Dance Performance". Kathakali is a highly stylized classical Indian dance-drama noted for the attractive make-up of characters, elaborate costumes, detailed gestures and well-defined body movements presented in tune with the anchor playback music and complementary percussion. It originated in the country's present day state of Kerala during the 17th century and has developed over the years with improved looks, refined gestures and added themes besides more ornate singing and precise drumming. [B]

Day 03: Kochi, Alleppey, Houseboat

This morning you will be driven to Alleppey to embark on a Houseboat. Then, cruise through the canals and experience the local life and watch the snake boats used during a snake boat race. Float in sheer bliss as Kerala's traditional Kettuvalloms or houseboats, styled as per traditional norms yet equipped with every available luxury and modern amenity offering you the opportunity to relax on the serene waters of the Lake Vembanad. Stay, dine and truly indulge the timeless beauty of life along the banks of Kerala. [B/L/D]

***Note:** Houseboats sail only during day time and come to a halt in the night because local fishermen place fishing nets on the backwaters during the night.*

Day 04: Houseboat, Kumarakom

This morning you will disembark and be driven to Kumarakom Village, a cluster of little islands on the Vembanadu Lake in Kerala. It is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna and is noted as a bird sanctuary visited by many species of migratory birds. The Vembanadu Lake, the largest backwater in Kerala, is also a major tourist attraction being habitat for many marine and freshwater fish species, teeming with Karimeen (cichlid fish), shrimp and prawns. The gorgeous green of the fringed palms ripple in the blue waters and blend into wavelets. The people on the banks of Vembanadu Lake are peace loving and follow a clean and healthy lifestyle. Their dressing is immaculate, usually spotless whites and the food consists mainly of rice and fish, the latter a very important item in their menu for lunch and dinner. Enjoy the rest of the day in the beautiful backwaters of Kerala and an evening sunset cruise on Vembanad lake. [B]

Day 05: Kumarakom, Periyar

After breakfast you'll be driven to Periyar (Thekkady), one of India's most fascinating natural wildlife sanctuaries, where you can watch wildlife at close range. The vegetation and the birds of Thekkady are

uniquely rich, vast and varied bearing no semblance to any other wildlife sanctuaries in the world. In the afternoon you will go to a spice plantation in Thekkady that is one of the major spice plantations in Kerala. The spice plantations are captivating farms to wander in to discover the scents of the different spices cultivated in various sections of each plantation. This evening enjoy a Kalaripayattu (Martial Art) show at a local theatre in Periyar and a walk through the local market. [B]

Day 06: Periyar, Madurai

Early morning cruise on Lake Periyar, the best way to witness the local wildlife. Periyar National Park has altogether 62-recorded kinds of mammals including many that are threatened species. Periyar is a highly protected tiger and elephant reserve. Other mammals found here include gaur, bison, sambar (horse deer), barking deer, mouse deer, dholes (Indian wild dogs), mongoose, foxes and leopards. Later continue to Madurai the second largest city of Tamil Nadu and an important cultural and commercial center, with a history going back to the 6th century BC, that once was the seat of Tamil learning and still is the place where the Tamil language is spoken in its purest form. The old city was planned in the shape of a lotus with the Meenakshi temple, the town's main attraction, at its center. Madurai has long been a center of learning and pilgrimage. [B]

Day 07: Madurai

After breakfast proceed for a sightseeing tour of Madurai, a unique temple town in that all its temples are living temples and it remains a major religious center attracting pilgrims all year round. Madurai's main attraction is the famous Meenakshi temples in the heart of the old town, a riotously baroque example of Dravidian architecture with gopurams (towers) covered from top to bottom with a breathless profusion of multi-colored images of gods, goddesses, animals and mythical figures. The temple complex is a city within the city and one can spend days exploring its labyrinthine corridors and halls! Another attraction is the Tirumalai Nayak Palace, built in 1636 and restored by Lord Napier, where dance drama concerts are performed daily. [B]

Day 08: Madurai, Chennai, Mahabalipuram

This morning you will be transferred to Madurai airport to board your flight for Chennai. Upon arrival you'll be driven to Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram), the coastal temple town with a beautiful beach over 12.5 miles long. An erstwhile port of the Pallava dynasty noted for its stone carvings, caves and rock cut temples. The afternoon is at leisure. [B]

Day 09: Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram, Mahabalipuram

Breakfast at the hotel before you will start a morning sightseeing tour of Mahabalipuram a city renowned as a sculptor's delight. There are 14 cave temples, nine monolithic rathas (vertical offset walls), three stone temples and four relief sculptured rock panels. Built in the Dravidian style in the 7th and 8th centuries, most of them are dedicated to Vishnu or Shiva. Sights include the Shore temple (a World Heritage site), Arjuna's Penance, the Five Rathas, various mandapams etc. The sculptures here depict deities, animals, Hindu fables and scenes of everyday life. Later continue for a tour of Kanchipuram, the ancient capital of the Pallavas, that lies 40 miles away from Chennai, and is one of the seven sacred cities of India attracting a large number of visitors, especially during the temple car festivals (January to May). It dates from the early Chola dynasty in the 2nd century and originally had 1000 temples, of which about 200 still survive. The seventh century Kailasnatha temple is the oldest and also considered the most beautiful of the town's temples. The Varadaraja temple built by the Vijayanagara kings, circa 16th century, has superb sculpture in its 96-pillared marriage hall. The main shrine is on an elephant shaped rock. Other noted temples are the Ekambaresvara and Vaikunth Perumal. Kanchipuram is also famous for silk textiles. [B]

Day 10: Mahabalipuram, Chennai

This morning you will drive to Chennai, India's fourth largest city, also called the Gateway to the South. From a tiny hamlet in 1639, it grew around the Fort St. George built by the British. A lush green city famed for its temples, silk, music and dance, Chennai gives a sense of serenity and spaciousness, enhanced by one of the world's largest and most beautiful beaches, the Marina beach. Upon arrival enjoy a sightseeing tour visiting the museum with its bronze gallery and superb collection of Chola art (closed Friday). Drive through the flower and fruit market, pass the High Court built in Indo-Saracenic style, the Fort Museum (closed Friday)

with its collection of colonial memorabilia and Marina Beach. Visit the San Thome Cathedral said to house the remains of St Thomas the Apostle, Kapaleeshwara temple and the Snake Park. [B]

Day 11: Chennai, USA

At the appoint time, depending on your flight schedule, you'll be transferred to Chennai airport to board flight back home. [B]

[B] = Breakfast | [B/L/D] = Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Your Tour includes:

- Transfers as required by the itinerary
- Representative for assistance on Airport transfers.
- 10 nights accommodation:
 - Kochi – 2 nights
 - Alleppey - 1 night
 - Kumarakom - 1 night
 - Thekkady - 1 night
 - Madurai - 2 nights
 - Mahabalipuram - 2 nights
 - Chennai - 1 night
- Meals:
 - Daily buffet breakfast
 - All meals on the Houseboat
- Transportation by air-conditioned vehicle as per the itinerary
- English speaking local guide for sightseeing tours at all places
- Entrance fees to the sites visited as per the itinerary

- Kathakali Dance show in Kochi
- Spice plantation visit in Periyar
- Visit to Periyar National Park on common boat
- 2 bottles of mineral water daily per person
- All local tax and service tax, as applicable at present.

Price does not include:

- International or Domestic airfares
- Any taxes and surcharges relating to airfares
- Travel insurance
- Wi-Fi at hotels
- Camera fees at the monuments (if applicable)
- All alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks
- Other meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Extras and gratuities
- Early check-in, late check-out
- Expenses of personal nature

Hotels in your Tour:

City	Hotel Name	Room Type	Tripadvisor
Superior First Class			
Kochi	Casino	Superior	4
Alleppey	Lake and Land Houseboat	Deluxe	4.5
Kumarakom	The Zuri Kumarakom	Zuri Lagoon	4.5
Thekkady	Cardamom County	A/C Periyar cottage	4.5
Madurai	Heritage	Deluxe Club	4.5
Mahabalipuram	Welcomhotel Kences Palm Beach	Garden View	4.5
Chennai	Raintree Annasalai	Deluxe	4.5
Deluxe			
Kochi	Vivanta by Taj Malabar	Superior Charm	4.5
Alleppey	Lake and Land Houseboat	Premier	4.5
Kumarakom	Kumarakom Lake Resort	Luxury Pavilion	4.5
Thekkady	Spice Village	Cottage	4.5
Madurai	The Gateway Hotel	Superior	4.5
Mahabalipuram	Radisson Temple Bay	Chalet Garden View	4
Chennai	ITC Grand Chola	Executive Room	4.5

Hotels will be confirmed at time of booking

Tour Prices:

Season	2-3 Pax		4-6 Pax		7-9 Pax	
	Double	Single	Double	Single	Double	Single
First Class						
May-Sep '18	\$1,769	\$2,569	\$1,499	\$2,299	\$1,495	\$2,289
Oct '18-Apr '19	\$1,839	\$2,625	\$1,529	\$2,319	\$1,505	\$2,295
May-Sep '19	\$1,715	\$2,395	\$1,399	\$2,079	\$1,375	\$2,055
Deluxe						
May-Sep '18	\$2,099	\$3,135	\$1,835	\$2,865	\$1,825	\$2,859
Oct '18-Apr '19	\$2,799	\$4,479	\$2,499	\$4,179	\$2,459	\$4,139
May-Sep '19	\$2,339	\$3,539	\$2,025	\$3,225	\$1,985	\$3,185

Prices are per person and may change without notice.

Blackout dates: December 20th '18 through December 5th '19

Airfare Supplement

Routing	Fare
Madurai/Chennai	\$120

* The domestic air portion may be cheaper if calculated as part of the international ticket. Ask your Travel Agent or HWDT to calculate your total fare.

Tour Code: IN05COK18TC

