

THE JEWELS OF SOUTHERN INDIA TOUR

Departing 21st February 2019

This fascinating tour explores the fusion of old and new that is found in the vibrant city of Mumbai, Cochin's rich history and culture and Kerala's verdant landscape of sprawling tea plantations, lakes and canals. Highlights include a revealing Mumbai at Dawn tour, a cycle tour exploring Cochin's diverse communities, a trek in Kerala's tea country and an overnight houseboat cruise on the beautiful and tranquil backwaters.

THE ITINERARY

Thursday 21st Feb - Departure

Depart London Heathrow on your direct overnight British Airways flight to Mumbai.

Friday 22nd Feb - Mumbai

On arrival the group will be met and transferred to stay for two nights on bed & breakfast basis at The Trident Nariman Point. The rest of the day is at leisure to enjoy the hotel's facilities or perhaps take a stroll along the promenade.

Mumbai is the city that never sleeps. Pulsating, alive, on the move and vibrant. Over the years, as colonialism gave way to independence, Mumbai has transformed itself into an entity with thriving markets, business houses and many different communities reflecting a cosmopolitan and trendy atmosphere rarely seen elsewhere. On the surface, it represents the ever-changing face of today's India - the old coupled with the dynamic new, and yet at its very core, the heart of the city is steeped in Indian customs and values.

Accommodation: The Trident Nariman Point [Breakfast]

Saturday 23rd Feb - Mumbai

After breakfast the group will depart for a tour of Elephanta Caves and the city of Mumbai. The island of Elephanta is an hour away from Mumbai by motor launch. The cave temples here were excavated between the 5th and 8th centuries AD are famous for their magnificently sculpted panels. The best known is the one that depicts the Maheshmurti, a three-headed image of Lord Shiva, which signifies the creator, preserver and destroyer of this universe as per Hindu mythology. The Portuguese named this island after a large stone elephant that was found near the landing. The elephant now stands at the Victoria and Albert Museum on the mainland.

On returning to Mumbai the group will take a tour of the city visiting the Prince of Wales Museum, built in grand Indo Saracenic style, drive past Marine Drive, Mumbai's most popular seaside promenade, and see the Kamala Nehru Park and Hanging Gardens on the slopes of

the Malabar hills, offering a fine view of the marine lines and the Chowpatty beach. Visit the Jain temple, Mani Bhawan where Mahatma Gandhi used to stay, and Dhobi Ghat, the city's famous open-air laundry. Also, drive past the Flora Fountain, the colourful Crawford Market and Victoria Terminus train station.

Accommodation: The Trident Nariman Point [Breakfast]

Sunday 24th Feb - Mumbai - Cochin

An early start this morning for a fascinating Mumbai at dawn tour. Get up at the crack of dawn for an exclusive peek into the underbelly of the city, and insights into what makes this magnificent city tick. The tour starts with the newspaper vendor distribution network. Next, men and women bargain with the wholesale fruit and vegetable vendors to pick up fresh produce for the day ahead. Our exploration continues and we reach Sassoon docks to see how 10 to 20 tonnes of fish arrive in the city every day. Finally we see glimpses of daily lives - bread-boys carrying fresh bread, the milkman riding past with milk canisters, the flower market and green fresh vegetable market.

Return to the hotel for breakfast and then transfer to the airport for a flight to Cochin. On arrival in Cochin transfer to The Eighth Bastion for a two night stay on bed & breakfast basis.

Set on a cluster of islands and a peninsula, Cochin (now, Kochi) is a blend of medieval Portugal, Holland and an English country village. Here you can see the oldest church in India, winding streets crammed with 500-year old Portuguese houses, cantilevered Chinese fishing nets, a well-settled Jewish community, a 16th century synagogue and a palace built by the Portuguese and given to the King of Cochin.

The rest of the day is at leisure.

Accommodation: The Eighth Bastion [Breakfast]

Monday 25th Feb - Cochin

This morning the group will depart on a cycle tour of cultural Cochin, a unique opportunity to discover the historic importance of Fort Cochin and to be introduced to 13 communities, ethnic & religious groups who have dwelled here for centuries, gaining an understanding of the different lifestyles, dress, food, culture, tradition and religions which still exist. A perfect example of unity in diversity.

Later, after lunch, take a tour of the city visiting the Dutch Palace, which has some of India's most beautiful murals, the Jewish Synagogue in the heart of Jew Town and the cantilevered Chinese fishing nets. See St. Francis Church where Vasco da Gama was originally buried, and the Santa Cruz Church with its pastel coloured interior and carved wooden panels.

In the evening proceed for the Kathakali Dance Performance.

Kathakali literally meaning "story dance" is the pantomimic dance drama, the dancing and the acting being blended together into an inseparable form. It is a combination of facial expressions and body movements, which brings out the thought and emotion of the character. Kathakali is predominantly a male art and the dancing is mostly of the masculine type. The position taken by the actor is angular. He never stands erect while acting, his knees are spread out and his legs forming a rhombus, his hands bent at the elbow and his palms on his hips. The outer feet are never flat on the ground and still the actor maintains a perfect balance. The female character is lasya which is gentle and grateful. This is particularly evident in love scenes.

Accommodation: The Eighth Bastion [Breakfast]

Tuesday 26th Feb - Cochin - Munnar

After breakfast you will depart Cochin for the road journey to Munnar and check in at The Blackberry Hills for a two night stay on bed & breakfast basis.

Munnar is situated at the confluence of three mountain streams - Mudrapuzha, Nallathanni and Kundala. At 1600 metres above sea level, this hill station was once the summer resort of the erstwhile British Government in South India. Sprawling tea plantations, picture-book towns, winding lanes and holiday facilities make this a popular resort town. Among the exotic flora found in the forests and grasslands here is the Neelakurinji. This flower bathes the hills in blue blooms every twelve years.

Spend the rest of the day at leisure.

Accommodation: The Blackberry Hills [Breakfast]

Wednesday 27th Feb - Munnar

After breakfast the group will proceed for the Top Valley Trek. Enroute to the starting point sightseeing spots include Mattupetty Dam, Echo Point and Kundala Dam. The trek, which will reach a height of 2250 metres above sea level, will begin from a tea estate village and proceed through evergreen shola forest, montane forest and grasslands. The ridges of the Western Ghats offer spectacular views of the lowlands of Tamil Nadu, the second highest peak of South India and Kolukkumalai, the highest tea estate of the world.

The trek will finish near the summit and the group will then be driven back to Munnar. Spend the rest of the day at leisure.

Accommodation: The Blackberry Hills [Breakfast]

Thursday 28th Feb - Munnar - Allepey

After breakfast at the hotel, transfer by road to Alleppey to board a houseboat for an overnight stay. Climb aboard the traditional kettuvallams (rice boats) converted into houseboats with bedrooms and attached toilets. Originally these boats were used as ferries to carry rice. Cruise the backwaters of Kerala through the narrow canals past Kerala villages, rich green paddy fields and verdant coconut trees. Lunch and dinner will be served on board.

Accommodation: Houseboat [Full Board]

Friday 01st Mar - Alleppey - Mararikulam

After breakfast on board the group will disembark and be transferred to Philipkutty's Farm for a cooking demonstration followed by lunch. The farm is located on a small island in the backwaters by Vembanad Lake. The farm is about 35 acres in size and is a reclaimed property which was built in the early 1950's. It is made up of ridges and canals, with all the planting done on the ridges, and produces coconuts, bananas, spices and vegetables.

After lunch, the group will proceed by road to Mararikulam check in at Abad Turtle for a three night stay on bed & breakfast basis.

Rest of the day at leisure.

Accommodation: Abad Turtle [Breakfast]

Friday & Saturday 2-3 Mar - Mararikulam

Days at leisure to relax on the beach or by the pool or unwind with an Ayurveda spa treatment.

Accommodation: Abad Turtle [Breakfast]

Sunday 04th Mar - Departure

Check out this morning. Rest of the day at leisure until transfer to Cochin airport for an evening flight to Mumbai connecting to the British Airways flight to London Heathrow.

THE EXCLUSIVE EXPERIENCES

- Guided tours of Elephanta Caves, Mumbai and Cochin
- Mumbai at Dawn tour
- Cultural Cochin cycle tour
- Kathakali dance performance
- Trek in Kerala tea country
- Backwater houseboat cruise
- Cooking demonstration & lunch at Philipkutty's Farm



THE PRICE

£2,575.00 per person - based on two people sharing

£995.00 - single supplement

WHAT THE PRICE INCLUDES

Services of a English speaking tour guide	Economy international & domestic flights
Accommodation throughout	Daily breakfast
Guided tours of Elephanta Caves, Mumbai and Cochin	Cooking demonstration & lunch at Philipkutty's Farm
Mumbai at Dawn tour	Cultural Cochin cycle tour
Kathakali dance performance	Trek in Kerala tea country
Backwater houseboat cruise	Overnight stay on houseboat
Entrance fees & airline departure taxes	Transfers and transportation on tour

WHAT THE PRICE EXCLUDES

Indian visa	Overweight luggage
Drinks/water at included lunches & dinners	Other meals where not mentioned in the programme
Personal expenses	Travel insurance
Tips & gratuities	