



Adventurebug Worldwide Ltd

Bespoke adventure travel & events since 2000

REAT Tourism License AT/MA/00022 Company Registration B93050763
Apto. Correos 1031, 29680 Estepona, Malaga, SPAIN TEL (34) 635 817 819

South India

Temples, Jungles & Backwaters

15 nights Chennai (1 night) Mahabalipuram (2 nights) – Pondicherry (1 night) – Tanjore (2 nights) – Chettinad (2 nights) – Madurai (1 night) – Thekkady (2 nights) - Kottayan (2 nights) – Kochin (2 nights)



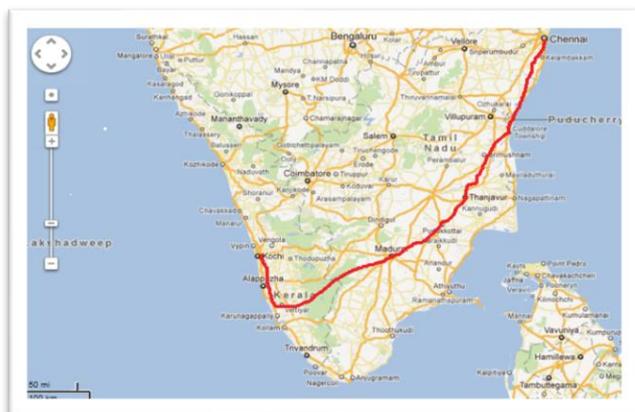
NAMASTE and welcome to India and its wonderful southern peninsular region – an unlimited experience of rich and vibrant cultures with lush topography and magnificent landscapes. If you have visited the north of India and Rajasthan in the past, then welcome back. If this is a new visit to India, you are in for a very special journey!

Southern India dates historically to some of the oldest tribal settlements in the world yet today boasts an advanced civilization. The Multitude of ancient languages, the various classical dances and rhythmic musical recitals, the vibrant attires, the unforgettable countryside, the spell bounding temples and the serene romanticism of backwaters make this part of India a truly unforgettable experience. This journey takes you to the frivolous temples of Tamilnadu to the tranquil charm of the plantation towns of Kerala and Karnataka – the meandering backwaters of god's own country Kerala. Focusing on a journey from East to West (Chennai to Kochi) via the southerly peninsula of the country, this journey takes in a vast array of landscape and tropical zones – including remote hillsides, lush palm beaches, temple-laden jungle destinations, wildlife sanctuaries and more.

We welcome you on this specially designed tour that focuses on Adventurebug's ethos: To experience a part of the world that is authentic, diverse and allows us a chance to integrate with local people and give back at the same time. We are certain you will enjoy this transformational journey to a remarkable land.

THEME: Discovery, light walking, visits to both urban monuments and rural areas. Transport in private air con bus with small excursions by boat (including houseboat).

INTENSITY: Gentle to Moderate – easy walking / longest transfer day is 4.5 hours in bus (average is 2.5 hours) / no long treks (This is not classified as a trekking holiday to India but instead light walking and discovery oriented).





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ITINERARY

ARRIVAL DAY: Chennai (1 night) (B)

This is considered an arrival day with no fixed tour program in Chennai. It allows for any potential variables in your long-haul travel. A private shuttle will collect you from arrivals at Chennai International Airport and take you to the Hotel Vestin Park Inn. Accommodation with breakfast and the airport transfer is included. Meals include breakfast only. Hotel Vestin Park Inn, or similar.



Day 01: Mahabalipuram (2 nights) (B, L, D)

From the hotel in Chennai, our tour begins. You are escorted to (1.5 hours) to Mahabalipuram in Tamil state. The temple town of Mahabalipuram is famous for its various temples and other attractive features which set the stage for our exploration. This 7th century city of the Pallavas is considered pioneer in the Dravidian architectural style. The city was earlier called Mallapuram and was a famous trading port of Pallavas. Stay overnight. Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner included. *Hotel Seabreeze*, or similar.

Day 02: Mahabalipuram (B, D)

After breakfast we visit, **Arjuna's Penance** - the pride of not only Mahabalipuram and Tamilnadu but also of India. Arjuna's Penance is the world's largest bas-relief that measures 27 meters and 9 meters along its length and breadth respectively. This huge whaleback shaped rock contains figures of Gods, Demigods, Men, Beasts and Birds. The whole structure looks like the penance of Arjuna, the Pandava prince and one of the protagonists of Indian epic Mahabharata; hence the name. Stay overnight / *Hotel Seabreeze*, or similar.



Breakfast and Dinner included. Attractions visited over our 2 day stay in Mahabalipuram include:

Five Rathas are one of the most magnificent tourist attractions at Mahabalipuram Beaches. Five Rathas are actually five monolithic temples, each created in a different style. They are modelled around chariots that are called 'Rathas' in Hindi. They are also known as the 'Pancha Pandava Rathas', which means that each one of them represent 5 Pandavas, the protagonists of Indian epic Mahabharata. The most mesmerizing aspect of this monument is the fact that the four of the Rathas are supposed to have scooped out of a single rock formation.

Shore Temple is one of the oldest temples in South India and the oldest one based on the Dravidian style architecture. It belongs to the early 8th century AD and is considered a pioneer in the Dravidian temple art. The monuments are floodlit at night in order to make it visible in the night. In fact, the temple looks great in moonlit night.

Tiger's Cave

Tiger's Cave is just 4 kilometers off to the main monument complex of the Mahabalipuram beach. The place is actually a well-used open-air theatre, where activities and programs highlighting the wonderful dance and cultural heritage of Tamilnadu are held. As this place is ashore Coromandel Coast, it is very serene and calm.



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Day 03: Pondicherry (1 night) (B, D)

After breakfast we drive 2.5 hours to The Union Territory of Pondicherry. With a 32 km long coastline on the Coromandel Coast, Pondicherry is a well-planned French Boulevard town. The numerous palm-fringed beaches, splendid seafront, lush backwaters, fabulous tiny fishing villages and hamlets and a dynamic harbour make it a much-beloved tourist spot. Stay overnight. Breakfast and Dinner included. Hotel Annamalai, or similar.



This will be a whole day tour & covers Pondicherry, Aurobindo Ashram, Museum, Beach, Auroville, & Melmaruvathur.

Shri Aurobindo Ashram - Shri Aurobindo, the great seer, poet and prophet of the twentieth century, made Pondicherry his home from 1910 till his death in 1950. His vision and ideals continue to draw people from all over the world.

Pondicherry Museum - On display is the findings of Arikamedu, the Chola bronzes and sculptures, glimpses of French heritage, specimens of modern and traditional handicraft, paintings, armouries, carvings and many other things of historical interest.

Auroville - Located 10 kms north of Pondicherry town, Auroville is envisioned as a Universal Town, where people from different nationalities, faiths and beliefs, can live in peace and harmony. The construction of this 'universal town' was started in 1968 under the guidance of The Mother, a Paris-born painter musician who became Sri Aurobindo's disciple and close companion from 1924 till his death in 1950. The development of this utopia is still in progress. Several countries have offered to set up permanent pavilions, reflecting the culture and ethos of their countries.



Day 04: Thanjavur (Tanjore 2 nights) (B, D)

After breakfast we transfer 4 hours to Tanjore. Previously known as Tanjore, Thanjavur in the state of Tamil Nadu is an ancient, fortified town with a glorious history dating back more than 1500 years. Thanjavur was the ancient capital of the Chola kings whose origins date back to the beginning of Christianity. Tamil Nadu's most beloved Chola monument is located in Thanjavur. Breakfast and Dinner included. Hotel Star Residency, or similar.

Built by Raja Raja in 1010, the UNESCO World Heritage Listed Brihadishwara Temple dominates Thanjavur's skyline. The dome at the top of the apex of the approximately 63-m high temple is allegedly a single piece of granite weighing an estimated 80 tonnes, which was hauled into place along an earth ramp in a manner similar to that used for the construction of the Pyramids of Giza. A huge Nandi bull carved out of a single piece of rock guards the gateway to the inner sanctum. Set in spacious grounds, the temple itself boasts several pillared halls and shrines. There is also an Archaeological Museum, situated within the grounds. The Nayaks of Madurai and also the Marathas constructed Thanjavur Palace and Museums, around 1550, where members of the erstwhile royal family still reside. After years of neglect, restoration is occurring. Two draw cards are the Royal Museum and the Durbar Hall. The Royal Museum offers an eclectic collection of regal memorabilia. Although unrestored, the Durbar Hall is magnificently regal.



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Day 05: Thanjavur (B, D)

We continue our visit of Thanjavur with visits to Temples in Trichy and Srirangapatnam. A full day of sightseeing in this historic area including opportunities to see the unique Tanjore style art (painting) and discover why Thanjavur is called the Rice Bowl of Tamil Nadu. Hotel Star Residency / Breakfast and Dinner included.

Day 06: Chettinad (2 nights) (B, D)

After breakfast we transfer 3 hours in our bus. Located in the centre of Tami Nadu, Chettinad is the home of the Nattukottai Chettiars called the Nagarathars who were and are still today, a prosperous banking and business community. This entire area is a unique tourist centre with its temples, old palatial buildings, architecture, woodcraft, textiles and delicious cuisine. It also has a vivid history and culture. The biggest town in Chettinad is called Karaikudi and it is about 90 minutes' drive from Madurai. We stay here for 2 nights of our journey. Breakfast and Dinner included. Hotel Chettinad Mansion, or similar.



One of the main attractions of Chettinad is the huge country homes of the Chettiars. These ancestral houses, that were built more than 100 years ago, are massive high walled structures and were decorated with the finest of wood and craftsmanship. They are packed with imported period furniture, chandeliers, curios and paintings. Also interesting is the Chettinad museum, which is located in an old converted mansion. It showcases traditional jewellery, textiles, household implements and utensils, and all other unique lifestyle products of the Chettiars. Among temples, the must see is the Meenakshi Sundereshwar temple, that is famous for its unique architecture.



Day 07: Chettinad (B, D)

Today we take an exploratory tour of the exquisite Chettinad village where we find woodcarving, silver embellishments, woven saris, palm-leaf baskets, gold jewelry, handmade tiles, architectural styling, and egg plastering. A relaxing day for exploring local artisans and craft markets and just being in Chettinad village to be part of its daily life. Stay overnight/ Hotel Chettinad Mansion, or similar. Breakfast and Dinner included.



Day 08: Madurai (B, D)

After breakfast we transfer 2.5 hours to Madurai. Considered a most prominent place of pilgrimage for Hindus, Madurai is one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities. Upon arrival, we visit the Meenakshi Temple -



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with its huge *gopurams* towering over the city, the life of Madurai revolves around the Meenakshi Sundareswar Temple, dedicated to Meenakshi, the lovely consort of Shiva or Sundareswar, as he is known here. Originally built by the Pandya king Kulasekhara in the 13th century, it attained its present splendour only in the hands of the Nayaks, 400 years later. This afternoon, we visit the Thirumalai Naykar Palace, built by Thirumalai Nayak and a great testimonial to their glorious reign. Built in the Indo-Saracenic style, all that remains of this magnificent mansion today are the principal entrance, the dancing hall and the main hall. Stay overnight. Hotel Star Residence, or similar. Breakfast and Dinner included.



Day 9: Thekkedy (B, D)

After breakfast we drive 3 hours to Thekkedy, through the cardamom hills, a lush region of spice growing and tropical flora. On our journey today, we enjoy the breathtaking views from various points and we supplement our journey with a visit to a spice plantation. On our arrival we check into the hotel and enjoy some relaxation time in beautiful natural surroundings. Stay overnight. Breakfast and Dinner

included. Hotel Ambadi, or similar.

Day 10: Thekkedy (B, D)

Today we explore this specially protected area by taking a boat tour of approximately 1 hour total. Set on attractive Periyar Lake side, *Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary* is in a beautiful setting and was designated a part of Project Tiger in 1973. Though Tigers are very rarely seen the park is better known for its elephants, which are very likely to be seen until Mar/Apr. Most bull elephants here are tuskless. Bison, Sambar, Wild boar and the barking Deer are also fairly common. In addition to 246 species of birds, there are 112 species of butterfly. Stay overnight. Breakfast and Dinner included.



Day 11: Backwaters of Kottayan (Houseboat) (B, L, D)

Today, after a 4-hour transfer, we board a houseboat that comprises furnished bedrooms with attached bathrooms, running water, and a lounge area in which to relax and enjoy the sights on the shore. We start our journey through scenic backwaters, passing one of the few areas in the world where farming is done below

sea level. The houseboat will cruise through the Chambakulam area by mid-afternoon and anchor to explore the boat yard, which displays the traditional long snake boats used in races. Visit St. Mary's Church, established by St. Thomas in 1721. In the evening, we catch a glimpse of village life along the



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backwaters and experience a way of life unique to this region. The boat will pass through picturesque stretches of the backwaters of Alleppey. Stay overnight on boat. Breakfast Lunch and Dinner included.



Day 12: Kumarakom (B, D)

Upon arrival to Kumarakom (a rural backwater agriculture zone) by mid-morning, we disembark our houseboat and visit this enchanting rural area for the day. A stay in a comfortable backwater resort allows us an opportunity to do some rural walking in the local communities, perhaps a local school and interchanging with the community members. Stay overnight. Breakfast and Dinner included. Hotel Manor Backwaters Resort, or similar.

Day 13: Cochin (B, D)

After a 3-hour transfer from our houseboat adventure we arrive to Kochi - The commercial capital of Kerala and the most cosmopolitan of Kerala's cities. Cochin is a fascinating blend of cultures. From its earliest days, it has been the favorite destination of globe-trotters and explorers. Blessed by one of the finest natural harbors in the world, Cochin has been eulogised as the Queen of the Arabian Sea. Stay Overnight. Hotel Gama Heritage, or similar Breakfast and Dinner included.



In and around Cochin are several cities of monumental value, but step into Fort Cochin, and you are in a totally different world. The Chinese fishing nets, the Jewish Synagogue, the Dutch palace, the Portuguese and British Architecture, all finely blend with the rich heritage of the land, intricately woven folklore and fact. In the evening we witness the oldest living opera of the world - Kathakali Dance Drama which owes its transnational fame to a nearly 1300 year old classical dance form which combines facets of ballet, opera, masque and the pantomime. It is said to have evolved from other performing arts like Kootiyattam, Krishnanattam and Kalarippayattu. Kathakali explicates ideas and stories from the Indian epics and Puranas.

Day 14: Cochin (B, D)

After breakfast we enjoy our visit of Fort Kochi. We start our sightseeing with Mattanchery Palace, built by the Portuguese (1557) as a gift for the Raja of Kochi in exchange for trading rights; it was largely rebuilt by the new occupants, the Dutch. Stay overnight. Breakfast and Dinner included. Further visits include Jew Town, now a fascinating mixture of shops (some selling antiques), warehouses and spice auction rooms. Later on drive to Fort Kochi beach area to visit St. Francis Church originally dedicated to Santo Antonio, the patron saint of Portugal, St. Francis Church is the first to reflect the new, European influenced tradition. Vasco da Gama died on the site in 1524 and was originally buried in the cemetery. Fourteen years later his body was removed to Portugal. Our final visit will be to huge Chinese fishing nets lining the entrance to the harbour mouth. Chinese traders are believed to have originally introduced them in the late 14th century although, today, parts of the nets are known by Portuguese names.

Day 15: ONWARD TRAVEL / After breakfast, drive to Airport to catch the flight for onward destination. Breakfast included.



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INCLUSIONS

- 15 nights accommodation (twin share) **all** rooms have internal ensuite facilities
- All meals as per itinerary
- All land transport in private A.C. microbus with driver / including baggage transfers to / from hotels.
- Other transport including private shuttles to/from station.
- Additional Transfers built into tour include a scenic boat tour and a houseboat experience.
- Guiding and Tour management services of Adventurebug Worldwide.
- Entrance Fees and / or guided visits as per itinerary
- Tips which cover all meals, baggage handlers, hotel services, local day guides, general assistance, restroom stops, etc. (*see NOT INCLUDED below)
- Taxes and Administration fees (prices are Net WITH NO HIDDEN FEES)

NOT INCLUDED

- Air transport (International and within India)
- Private insurance (emergency, evacuation and / or cancellation)
- Medical expenses and / or services required on tour
- Additional services such telephone, laundry, etc.
- Beverages at meals and personal drink such as alcohol, mineral water, soft drinks.
- *Tipping for one local guide and one driver with assistant:
RECOMMENDED minimum TIPPING value (45-50 \$US per person TOTAL):
 - Local Guide = 30-35 dollars US / person
 - Driver = 15 dollars US / person

INDIA – The Facts

India has more than a billion people yet it does not feel overcrowded due to its immense size. It is desperately poor yet emerging as an economic powerhouse in some areas. However, wealth like in all capitalistic societies is held by less than 2% of the entire population. It is largely a rural – agricultural inhabited society with a complicated religious and political structure however the value system of society is constant with most developing countries worldwide – that is that poverty is undeniable and that family and community are at the centre of importance. Oh, and cricket is THE SPORT!

What to Expect?

India is a voyage of inner and outer travel that is best managed by those with a healthy and hearty **attitude**. This country will test your mental, physical and emotional capacities yet, with the right perspective, enhance your spiritual connection to what is really important.

Here are a few 'top of list' expectations:

Pollution in city areas; cows EVERYWHERE; men in business suits and women in saris; poverty and extreme wealth; bicycles; motorbikes and people walking everywhere; spicy food and bland food; smog in the cities; friendly welcomes; good beer but little wine; staring and very personal questions about your wealth, your family, your interests; smells of sewage and waste; beautiful landscapes; deserts and woodlands; mountains and lakes; crippled people; children everywhere; temples; holy men with long white beards; beggars and thieves; arts and crafts; busy markets; haggling and hassles! Normal sit down toilets... cozy hotels; India has it all...

The Weather?

India's Southern Peninsular region varies however it is the warm, tropical zone of the country and our journey is in the dry season, not the monsoon. Average temperatures in the high 70's with winter highs reaching 90's can be expected. Generally a dry time of the year with low risk of tropical storms.



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What's the food like?

Generally Indian food, eaten by billions of people is spicy and varied. Southern India, boasting the strongest Hindu faith is characteristically vegetarian. Curry is only one of hundreds of spices utilized but in the west we naively call everything curry! Traditionally many Indians are vegetarians and staple food tends to be tasty bread (roti), lentils (dhal) and vegetables. However, chicken, goat, lamb and fish are common, even in our travels in the south. Beef however is forbidden (cows are sacred), so forget about steak! Despite the huge difference between the western diet and India, our tour groups do tend to enjoy the culinary delights India has to offer.

What to Bring and What to Wear?

As always travel light, bringing easy to wash travel wear and comfy walking shoes (not trekking boots). Light layers, a sun hat and some relaxing evening wear for our cozy hotels. A medium size rolling suitcase is fine and a light day pack to carry your water bottle, camera and guidebook or journal. Bring prescription medicines, toiletries, hand wash and camera batteries.

Money and Expenses in India?

The Rupee is the currency and the exchange is approximately 1\$US = 50 INR

Costs for general goods is very cheap still – bottle of water is about 30 cents US in the market and up to a dollar in restaurants. Beer and soft drinks about 20% more. Shoppers tend to buy crafts, gifts and clothing in India at a very good rate.

HEALTH Concerns?

The region of India we visit and the time of year (winter) is one of the healthiest times to travel. Outside of 'Delhi Belly' from adjusting to the food, most travellers to India find few irritations or health problems. Common sense should be practiced however such as regular hand washing before meals; utilizing mineral water; avoiding foods too spicy at first and generally taking care of yourself (mediate alcohol consumption and get plenty of rest).

For full and updated traveller's health information on India, please visit the (WHO) World Health Organization website (<http://www.who.int/countries/ind/en/>)

Malaria is considered a risk in the south so it's advisable to consult professional advice. Updated vaccinations for travel to the developing world is strongly recommended.

SECURITY Issues?

India is deeply impoverished and despite its very spiritual nature, we as western visitors carry more materialism and wealth on one vacation than they have in a lifetime. Opportunists such as pick pockets and petty thieves exist. Outright muggings and violent attacks are rare. All our hotels and destinations are secure and care should always be practiced in the evening and in certain districts.

The risk of terrorism is, like anywhere in the world, unpredictable. Mumbai suffered a terrible attack some years ago and there is continual conflict in the far north (Kashmir) and some boarder regions with Pakistan. Our itinerary tends to avoid these conflict zones and is very much in the tourist quarters of the country, particularly the south that has been statistically at peace.

PASSPORT and INDIAN VISA

Be absolutely certain that your passport is valid for travel to / from India and that you have the appropriate VISA. Please consult the embassy or consul in your country for this information and do it well in advance – you may be without your passport for some time to obtain this visa! Visas for India are now officially available on-line via the Government of India website.