

BEST OF SOUTH INDIA

(Country: India)

Duration: 16 DAYS

This 15 Nights/16 Days journey reveals South India's rich cultural heritage covering the three most important states of South India, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The journey starts with the visit to the financial capital of India Mumbai highlighting the spirit of the people of Mumbai and its cosmopolitan culture. Home of the Indian Cinema Bollywood. This journey further takes us to Kerala God's own Country where we spend the next 7 Nights and experience tranquility, the beautiful backwaters, lush green surroundings, tea estates, spice plantation, mouthwatering delicacies and unwind ourselves with Ayurvedic massage therapy. After an insight of Kerala, we proceed to Tamil Nadu the bordering state of Kerala, where we get to see the rich culture and heritage South India has to offer with the massive temples at Madurai, Tanjore, experience the culture at one and the only place in India where French is still popular Pondicherry – Former French Colony. Visit the shore Temples of Mahabalipuram – A world Heritage site. Our journey finally ends at Chennai City with its beautiful Marina Beach.

Tour Summary

Day #	Destination	Overnight	Meals
1	Arrival at Mumbai	President-IHCL SeleQtions / ITC Grand Central (2 Nights)	
2	Mumbai	President-IHCL SeleQtions / ITC Grand Central	(B, D)
3	Mumbai/ Cochin	Trident Hotel (2 Nights)	(B, D)
4	Cochin	Trident Hotel	(B, D)
5	Cochin / Thekkady	Cardamom County (2 Nights)	(B, D)
6	Thekkady	Cardamom County	(B, D)
7	Thekkady / Alleppey	Deluxe A.C. Houseboat (1 Night)	(B, L, D)
8	Alleppey/ Kovalam	Travancore Heritage (2 Nights)	(B, D)
9	Kovalam	Travancore Heritage	(B, D)
10	Kovalam /Madurai	Heritage Madurai (2 Nights)	(B, L, D)
11	Madurai	Heritage Madurai	(B, D)
12	Madurai/ Tanjore	Hotel Sangam (1 Night)	(B, D)
13	Tanjore/ Pondicherry	The Promenade/ Villa Shanti (01 Night)	(B, D)
14	Pondicherry / Chennai	Hyatt Regency Chennai (2 Nights)	(B, D)
15	Chennai	Hyatt Regency Chennai	(B, D)
16	Chennai / Onward destination		(B, D)

Day 01: Arrive Mumbai (INDIA)

Namaste – Welcome to India! Upon arrival we are greeted the traditional Indian way with hands clapped together. We are then transferred to our hotel and have the balance of the day free.

Overnight: President-IHCL SeleQtions/ ITC Grand Central (2 nights)

Day 02: Mumbai

We start our day with a visit to the Gateway of India, Mumbai's most famous monument. Here we embark on our excursion to the Elephanta Caves*, located on an island in the Sea of Oman. The caves contain a collection of rock

art linked to the cult of Shiva. Here, Indian art has found one of its most perfect expressions, particularly the huge high reliefs in the main cave. We return to Mumbai by motor launch and visit the Prince of Wales Museum and Shivaji Terminus*, formerly known Chhatrapati as Victoria Terminus Station, an outstanding example of Victorian Gothic Revival Architecture in India, blended with themes deriving from Indian traditional architecture. The building, designed by the British Architect F. W. Stevens, became the symbol of Bombay as the 'Gothic City' and the major international mercantile port of India. Its remarkable stone dome, turrets, pointed arches and eccentric ground plan are close to traditional Indian palace architecture. Our next Stop is at Mani Bhawan, where Mahatma Gandhi stayed here during the Freedom Struggle. The house is now converted into a Museum. From here we leave for Hanging Gardens, the Zoroastrian Towers of Silence, the bustling Crawford Market and drive past Haji Ali, the tomb of a wealthy Muslim merchant. We end our tour at the Dhobi Ghat, the world's largest outdoor laundry. The word Dhobi Ghat is used all over India to refer to any place where many washers are present.

(B, D)

Day 03: Mumbai/ Cochin (Flight)

Today we are transferred to airport for our flight to Kochi, formerly known as Cochin. On arrival, we are transferred to our Hotel. Rest of the day is free for personal activities.

Overnight: Trident Hotel (2 nights) (B, D)

Day 04: Cochin

In the morning we explore Kochi, formerly known as Cochin, Kerala's commercial capital with one of the finest natural harbours in the world. We visit St. Francis Church, the oldest European Church in India. Vasco De Gama was buried here before his remains were taken back to Portugal. Next we visit the Roman Catholic Santa Cruz Cathedral built by the Portuguese in the 16th century; which is famous for beautiful paintings on its ceiling. We continue to the Jewish Quarter with its Old Synagogue and the Dutch Palace, built by the Portuguese. Later we take a boat cruise to visit Bolghatty Palace and observe the fascinating Chinese fishing nets in action. In the evening we enjoy Kathakali Dance Performance. This dramatized presentation of a play usually based on the Hindu epics of Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas, is a unique combination of literature, music, painting, acting and dance.

(B, D)

Day 05: Cochin/ Thekkady (Drive)

After breakfast we drive to Thekkady to check in our hotel. The area is famous for its spice plantations. In the afternoon we will visit a spice plantation, where cardamom, pepper, ginger, turmeric, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, all spice, and tea are grown. We will also see Ayurvedic medicinal plants and will have the opportunity to buy some garden-fresh spices. In the evening we return to our hotel for dinner.

Overnight: Cardamom County (2 nights) (B, D)

Day 06: Thekkady

Our day starts with a jungle walk at the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary in the early morning, after which we return to our hotel for breakfast. The Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the world's most fascinating natural wildlife reserves. Spread across 777 square kilometres it was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1978. In the afternoon we enjoy a boat ride on Lake Periyar to watch animals in their natural habitat by the water's edge. We are likely to see animals like boars, Sambars, wild dogs, Langur monkeys and wild elephants. The sanctuary is also a haven for water birds and we can see plenty of darters, grey herons, egrets and kingfishers. The evening is free to explore the local bazaar in Thekkady and purchase some of the famous spices grown in the area.

(B, D)

Today we drive to Alleppey. On arrival in Alleppey we board our traditional houseboat and begin our journey through the picturesque backwaters and small lakes relaxing in the tranquility of Kerala's beautiful scenery. On our journey we come across many boats, canoes and other crafts, as we observe the traditional way of life and activities of the local people.

*Overnight: **Deluxe A.C. Houseboat** (1 night) (B, L, D)*

Day 08: Alleppey/ Kovalam (Drive)

We enjoy breakfast on board, sail to Alleppey and disembark at the Puthenagady Jetty. A comfortable drive gets us to beautiful Kovalam Beach on the Malabar Coast near Trivandrum. We then get to relax by the beach with endless white sands by the blue waters of the Arabian Sea in secluded coconut groves.

*Overnight: **Travancore Heritage** (2 nights) (B, D)*

Day 09: Kovalam

Enjoy 01 Rejuvenation Massage (01 Hour) and free day to relax on the beach.

(B, D)

Day 10: Kovalam/ Kanyakumari/ Madurai (Drive)

After breakfast we leave for Madurai en-route visiting Kanyakumari, the "Lands' End" of India on the way. Kanyakumari is the southernmost tip of peninsular India where the waters of the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea meet. We visit the Temple of Goddess Kumari, the Vivekananda Rock Memorial in the sea where Swami Vivekananda mediated. After lunch we continue our journey to Madurai. On arrival, we check in our Hotel.

*Overnight: **Heritage Madurai** (2 nights) (B, L, D)*

Day 11: Madurai

Today we explore Madurai, the second largest city in Tamil Nadu. The city revolves around the Meenakshi Amman Temple, a structure in the Dravidian style of architecture. The complex houses 14 gopurams (gateway towers) ranging from 45-50m in height, the tallest being the southern tower, 51.9 metres (170 ft) high, and two golden sculptured shrines over sanctum of the main deities. The temple is a significant symbol for the Tamil people, and has been mentioned since antiquity in Tamil literature, though the present structure was built from 1623 to 1655. There are an estimated 33,000 sculptures in the temple and amongst the highlights are the Hall of a Thousand Pillars, the Tirumalai Nayaka Temple and the Temple Art Museum. In the evening we enjoy night closing ceremony of the Temple.

(B, D)

Day 12: Madurai/ Tanjore (Drive)

After breakfast we drive to Thanjavur and check in at our hotel. Thanjavur is popularly known as Tanjore. In the afternoon we explore the Brihadisvara Temple, one of the Great Living Chola Temples*. The temple, set in spacious grounds, has several pillared halls and shrines. Inscriptions record the names of dancers, musicians and poets a reminder of the significance of this area to the development of the arts in the 11th century. We end our tour of Tanjore with a visit to the Tanjore Palace & Museum, which has an eclectic collection of regal memorabilia most of it dating from the early 19th century.

*Overnight: **Hotel Sangam** (1 night) (B, D)*

Day 13: Tanjore/ Pondicherry (Drive)

After breakfast we drive to Pondicherry. This former French Colonial city in Tamil Nadu didn't come under Indian rule until 1954. Pondicherry, otherwise known as Puducherry means a "New Hamlet" and is located on the

Coromandal Coast. Its main attraction is actually outside of town: the ashram at Auroville, built by followers of Sri Aurobindo, a philosopher-prophet born in 1870, famous for his Integral Yoga and philosophical literary works. In the International Town where people from all over the world reside, we will find the Matrimandir, the famous monument built by the Auroville Society representing a lotus flower. Today we will also visit the 400-year old Manakula Vinayagar Temple, which has several frescos telling the life story of a half human and half animal lord.

Overnight: The Promenade / Villa Shanti (1 night) (B, D)

Day 14: Pondicherry / Mahabalipuram/ Chennai (Drive)

After breakfast we drive to Mahabalipuram. On arrival we visit the Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram*. This group of sanctuaries, founded by the Pallava kings, was carved out of rock along the Coromandel Coast in the 7th and 8th centuries. It is known especially for its rathas (temples in the form of chariots), mandapas (cave sanctuaries), giant open-air reliefs such as the famous 'Descent of the Ganges', and the temple of Rivage, with thousands of sculptures to the glory of Shiva. After that, we continue our journey to Chennai. On arrival we check in our Hotel. Rest of the day is free to relax.

Overnight: Hyatt Regency Chennai (2 nights) (B, D)

Day 15: Chennai

We tour Chennai, visiting the National Art Gallery & Museum, which contains some of the best collections of bronzes in the country including the famous icon of Natraja. We continue to India's oldest surviving British church, St. Mary's Church, built in 1680. We end our tour with a visit to People's Park and the beautiful Marina Beach and the clock towers.

(B, D)

Day 16: Chennai / Onward destination

Today is free for shopping and other personal activities. Hotel Check out time is 12:00 Noon. In the evening we enjoy our farewell dinner at local well-known restaurant. After an incredible tour of the Best of South India, we are transferred to the international terminal for our flight home. We bid farewell to India after what will have been a memorable journey into history, culture, art, architecture, making new friends and lots of memories.

(B, D)

* DENOTES UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES INCLUDED:

- Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus)
- Elephanta Caves
- Great Living Chola Temples
- Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram
- Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai

B = Breakfast L = Lunch D = Dinner

TOUR DATES & PRICES: BEST OF SOUTH INDIA (Season 2022-2023)

Tour Price Includes

- Hotels as mentioned or similar
- Meals as mentioned: 15 Breakfast, 02 Lunch & 15 Dinners (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Regional/domestic airfare in coach class
- All sightseeing and transfers by Air- conditioned transportation
- Services of English-Speaking guide for sightseeing (Local guides for 1-5 Pax and tour escort throughout the

tour for 6 pax and above)

- Entrances fees
- Harbor Cruise in Cochin
- 01 Rejuvenation Massage for 01 Hour at Kovalam
- Complementary N95 masks (Max 2 Per Passenger).

Tour Price does not include

- International airfare & departure taxes
- Insurance & visa fees
- Drinks/beverages with meals
- Tips/gratuities

General Conditions

- **The prices are on Per Person basis in AUD.**
- The above cost is valid for the mentioned departure dates only.

- Please note that smoking is prohibited in public and all parts of the hotels except in designated areas and bedrooms, where smoking is permitted. Should you desire a smoking bedroom, please let us know. The fulfilment of this request is subject to availability.
- Unless specified, check-in at hotels in India is at 14:00 Hrs and check out is at 12:00 Hrs
- Our liability does not arise in case of Force Majeure (political disturbances, natural phenomenon etc.)
- Reporting time at the Domestic airport is generally 2 hrs prior to departure of flight
- Reporting time at the International at airport is generally 3 hrs prior to departure of flight
- Check-in counters of most flights close approximately 45 minutes before departure and boarding gates close about 15 minutes prior departure
- For booking domestic air seats we need names as per passport.
- Baggage allowance in internal flights within India is 15 Kg per person
- We will be providing transport as per below
 - 2 to 3 pax we provide AC Toyota INNOVA SUV
 - 4 to 8 pax we provide AC Tempo Traveler

Tour Size

Minimum: 02

Maximum: 08

Notes

Combine this tour with Best of North India to make a 27 Nights/28 Days tour covering the North and South India, called Discover India Tour. Please email or call us at 1.800.663.0844 for more details.