



Incredible Indian Tours Southern Odyssey

22 Days Goa to Chennai
31 Jan - 21 Feb 2012



Maximum Group Size 10

Fully Escorted by Deb Kindness, who has over 18 years experience in India and Nepal

Accommodation 15 nts hotel, 3 nts guesthouses, 1 nt homestay, 1 nt houseboat, 1 nt overnight train

Transport Airport Transfers, Trains, Private vehicle (4WD/SUV or 10 seater minibus), Cycle Rickshaws, Auto Rickshaws, Taxis as required for sightseeing

Meals 7 dinners, 17 breakfasts, 6 lunches

Entrance Fees Included for all sites visited as part of the itinerary

Starts in Goa, Tuesday 31st January 2012

Finishes in Mahabalipuram (60km south of Chennai), Tuesday 21st February 2012

Cost From AUD3690 (or equivalent) per person twin share

Beginning our journey in fascinating Panjim, the quaint and charming capital of Goa, we travel east to explore the ruins of the Vijayanagar Empire in Hampi. Heading south, we spend time in Mysore the old capital of the Wodeyar Dynasty where we witness the spectacular Mysore Palace lights and the colourful Devaraja markets before heading into Kerala – God’s Own Country. This extraordinarily beautiful part of India offers extreme diversity. Enjoy the breathtakingly beautiful Backwaters, beaches, tea, coffee and spice plantations and wildlife reserves. Watch fishermen in Cochin pull in the nets as they have done for centuries. Experience life along the tranquil islands of the backwaters. Trek through a wildlife park and maybe catch a glimpse of wild elephants, deer, giant squirrels or wild boar. Moving on to Tamil Nadu, considered to be the last bastion of traditional Hindu culture in India, we visit ancient monuments and temple towns before finishing our tour in Mahabalipuram resplendent with World Heritage rock cut temples and charming beach resorts.

ITINERARY

Day 1 Goa

Arrival Day. We have a group meeting at 6pm to discuss the tour before heading out for dinner.

Day 2 Goa

A morning walking tour of Panjim, the quaint and fascinating capital of Goa, is followed by a visit to Old Goa, home to the Basilica of Bom Jesus where the mortal remains of St Francis Xavier are housed between ‘viewings’ that take place every 10 years. A sunset cruise along the Mandovi river introduces us to the Indian side of Goa as a holiday destination.

Days 3-4 Hampi

A morning train up into the Western Ghats through spectacular gorges and rainforest brings us to Hampi where we get to explore the myriad sights and temples that make up the ruins of the Vijayanagar Empire’s 15th century capital. On the evening of day 4, we take an overnight train to Bangalore.

Days 5-6 Mysore

An early arrival into Bangalore and then a 2 hour drive gets us to Mysore. We wander the vast halls of the splendid Mysore Palace and visit the amazing temples at Somnathpur, a drive that takes us by some of the most idyllic rural scenes in India. We also visit Chamundi temple and the colourful Devaraja Market. Don’t miss the incredible evening illuminations at Mysore Palace which is lit up by more than 90,000 light bulbs.

Day 7 Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary

We have a 3 hour drive to Tholpetty, the gateway to the little-known Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. A leisurely afternoon before we head into the park in jeeps for the chance to spot wild elephants, bison and deer.

Days 8-9 Kannur (Cannanore)

Another morning safari into the National Park before we take a 4 hour drive back to the coast to Kannur on the north coast of Kerala. Here we stay in small houses near the beautiful, secluded beach. During our stay here we hope to enjoy the traditional theyyam ritual which is performed most nights of the year somewhere around Kannur. Day 9 is a free day to relax on the beach or perhaps visit the St Angelo Fort in Kannur town.

Days 10-11 Cochin

We have a 6 1/2 hour train ride this morning to Cochin. We spend the afternoon visiting Fort Cochin and soaking up the ambience in this wonderfully laid back town. We visit Jew Town, Mattancherry palace and the quaint Jewish synagogue. Kerala is famous for Kathakali, an intricate and stylised form of dance. We have the opportunity to see a short performance as well as watch the intricate makeup application beforehand.

Day 12 Alleppey

A short 2 hour journey brings us to Alleppey where our traditional Kettuvallam (rice barge) houseboat awaits us. We spend the next day slowly drifting past idyllic tropical rural scenes in the lush palm fringed backwaters, on the way visiting villages to see local industries such as coir-making, toddy-tapping and boat building.

Day 13 Chennamkary

Our houseboat drops us off after breakfast at our Keralan Family Homestay. Our welcoming hosts will show us around the village which is situated on an vehicle-free island within the backwaters. We have the opportunity to ride cycles to neighbouring villages, row canoes around the island or just chill in a hammock.

Days 14-15 Munnar

This morning we drive up the ghats through rubber, tea, coffee and pineapple plantations on a beautiful 4 hour journey to Munnar. On day 15 we have a full day trek around the rolling verdant hills of manicured tea plantations and estates dotted amongst picturesque hamlets. A chance to enjoy the crisp fresh air and stunning scenery surrounding some of the worlds largest and highest tea estates.

Days 16-17 Periyar Tiger Reserve

A spectacular 4 hour drive today through the Cardamom hills—lined with tea, cocoa, tapioca, bamboo, coconut, banana and spice plantations takes us to Kumily, our destination for the next 2 nights. We visit a spice plantation in the afternoon followed by an early morning guided walk through the jungle on day 17 which is the best way to experience the park and hopefully see Elephants, Deer, Monkeys and more up close. A free afternoon to relax or shop or perhaps have an ayurvedic massage.

Days 18-19 Madurai

We have a 4 hour journey this morning to Madurai. Home of the spectacular Sri Meenakshi Temple, Madurai is the quintessential Tamil Nadu temple town. We have the chance to visit the temple at various times of the day—don’t miss the evening ‘putting the gods to bed ceremony’. Lots to do here in Madurai - wander the colourful markets, view Gandhi’s blood stained dhoti at the Gandhi Memorial Museum or visit the Tirumalai Nayak Palace.

Day 20 Pondicherry

An early morning train ride and short drive gets us to Pondicherry. After lunch we wander the charming French quarter, promenade along the waterfront with local families and enjoy French inspired cuisine in this laid back and peaceful town.

Day 21 Mahabalipuram

After a short drive north to Mahabalipuram and checking into our beachside resort hotel, we visit to the ‘5 Rathas’ - a world heritage site as well as the ancient shore temple and rock-cut temples in Mahabalipuram. Dinner tonight is included to celebrate the completion of our incredible adventure.

Day 22 Departure Day

There are no organised activities for today. You may leave at any time.



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