



Incredible Indian Tours South Indian Odyssey

24 Days Goa to Chennai

9 Jan - 1 Feb 2023



Maximum Group Size 10

Accommodation 18 nts hotel, 2 nts guesthouses, 1 nt homestay, 1 nt luxury houseboat, 1 nt overnight train

Transport Airport Transfers, Domestic Flight, Trains, Private vehicle (4WD/SUV or minibus)

Meals 23 breakfasts, 11 lunches, 8 dinners

Starts in Goa

Finishes in Mahabalipuram (60km south of Chennai)

Cost Please contact us for prices

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 the erstwhile French colonial town of Pondicherry and charming Mahabalipuram resplendent with World Heritage rock cut temples and 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 3-5 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 5, we take an overnight train to Bangalore.

Days 6-7 Mysore

An morning arrival into Mysore where we enjoy a leisurely breakfast at our hotel. We wander the vast halls of the splendid Mysore Palace and visit the amazing temples at Somnathpur, a short drive away through the countryside. We also visit Chaumundi temple and the colourful Devaraja Market before witnessing the incredible evening illuminations at Mysore Palace which is lit up by around 97,000 light bulbs.

Days 8-9 Kannur (Cannanore)

We have a 4 hour drive west to the Kerala coast to Kannur. 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 winter season somewhere around Kannur.

Days 10-12 Cochin

We take a train 7 hours today south to Cochin. We spend time visiting Jew Town and Mattanchery Palace, the St Francis Church and Chinese Fishing nets and soaking up the ambience in this wonderfully laid back town. Kerala is famous for Kathakali, an intricate and stylised form of dance. We watch a short performance as well as witness the intricate makeup application beforehand.

Day 13 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 14 Chennamkary

Our houseboat drops us off after breakfast at our Kerala 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 15-16 Munnar

This morning we drive up the ghats through rubber, tea, coffee and pineapple plantations on a beautiful 5 hour journey to Munnar. On day 16 we take a half day hike 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 17-18 Periyar Tiger Reserve

A spectacular 3 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 18 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.

Day 19 Madurai

We have a 4 hour journey this morning to Madurai. Home of the spectacular Sri Meenakshi Temple, with its sculpture festooned towers, Madurai is the quintessential Tamil Nadu temple town. We visit the Gandhi Ashram before enjoying an afternoon by the pool at the resort. Perhaps we might get to experience a cultural show at our ethnic resort hotel.

Days 20-21 Pondicherry

After a morning visit to the Sri Meenakshi temple, we take a flight to Chennai and a 3 hour drive to reach Pondicherry where we can enjoy a fabulous French inspired dinner. A morning walking tour will help you experience the wonderful charms of this erstwhile French Colony. If you wish, visit the Aurobindo Ashram or head out to Auroville to visit the Matrimandir. If shopping is more your thing, you won't be disappointed by the boutiques and Auroville outlets in Pondicherry town.

Days 22-23 Mahabalipuram

After a leisurely morning, we have a 2 hour drive north to Mahabalipuram where you can spend the afternoon relaxing on the beach or by the pool. On Day 23, we visit 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 24 Departure Day

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

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