



Southern India

Price from: US\$7,750 per person based on four travellers

Start: Chennai

Finish: Cochin

Your Journey

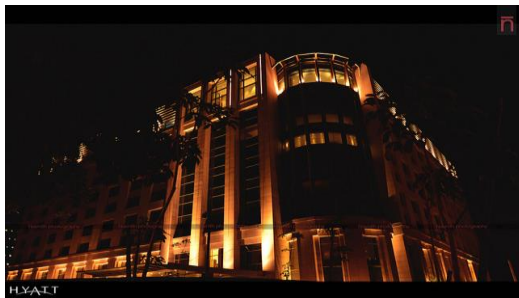
Day 1

Chennai

Welcome to Chennai! Upon arrival into Chennai International Airport your guides will meet you as you disembark from the plane and usher you through customs and immigration. Your driver awaits to take you to your hotel, The Park Hyatt, where you can relax after a long flight. Located about 20 minutes (depending on arrival time!) from the city, it's the perfect way to unwind and start your trip.

Day 2

After breakfast you will meet our friend Dr. V.R. Devika, who holds a PhD on Gandhian communication and does regular workshops on peace education and communication skills for students and teachers. V.R. is the founder and managing trustee of The Aseema Trust, a non-profit organization for linking traditional performing arts, education and Mahatma Gandhi with schools. She has also specialized in Tamil culture and arts as well as Gandhi, and she presents both subjects to schools across India. Later, you will visit Mylapore, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Chennai. We'll take a walk around the basilica of St. Thomas as well as the famous Kapleeswar Temple dedicated to Shiva, the God of Destruction. Tonight, Sabitha Radhakrishnan, a multi-talented textile historian, will prepare a home-cooked meal before giving you a brief lecture on textiles heritage in Southern India and showing you her priceless collection.



HOTEL | Park Hyatt, Chennai

Thoughtful understatement embraces contemporary design at Park Hyatt Chennai. Located next to the governor's residence, alongside the Guindy Forest Reserve, this serene sanctuary features design elements inspired by flowing landforms that lead to a serene lily pond and courtyard situated at the heart of the hotel. The contemporary artwork weaves a unique story through Chennai's rich cultural heritage as the textile hub of Southern India.

Days 3 & 4

Chennai to Madurai – Soul of Tamil Nadu

We'll get an early start today as we visit the famous Kalaskshetra school of Performing Arts. We should arrive on time for the morning assembly and see some of the classes. V.R. gives you a talk on Nataraja, the cosmic dancer before visiting the museum to see the excellent Chola bronzes.

This afternoon, after lunch, you'll take a drive to Mahaballipuram a small beach town 60 kilometres south of Chennai that is famous for its stone carvings. Mamallapuram dates back to somewhere between the seventh and ninth centuries and the structures, carved out of granite, are among the oldest examples of South Indian architecture known today. We'll watch the gorgeous sunset at the shore temple before heading back to the city in time for dinner.

This morning we say goodbye to Chennai and fly to Madurai. After a quick check in and freshen up, you'll visit the focal point of both worship and social life in this "soul" of Tamil Nadu. Later, if time allows, we'll also visit the market, much of which is housed in the ruins of an ancient temple. You'll visit the temple kitchen to watch the preparation of food for the gods, cuisine that is offered to the gods before distributed to the public.



HOTEL | Heritage, Madurai

Spacious, airy rooms with detailed sitting areas, luxurious bedrooms and unbelievably vast bathrooms, all decorated with understated elegance. Cleverly transformed light fittings delight you at every turn: a riveting piece that once was a lantern; another, a carriage light; an old diya in new avatar, and the piece de resistance: a sun deck in each villa, that opens out into your own private plunge pool.

Days 5 & 6

Munnar & Emerald Tea Plantations

This morning you will set off for Munnar, high in the hills of Kerala. You'll stay as guests on a wonderfully renovated family plantation in the midst of stunning fields of emerald coloured tea. During your time here, you'll learn all about tea! Learn how to pick tea and convert the leaves into the favoured hot beverage, learn how tea is graded and hike in the glorious surrounding hills, or if you're up to it, we head off in search of the Ibex, the sanctuary's elusive mountain goat.

The next morning you'll drive to Cochin, stopping to visit the Tea Museum along the way, then have lunch in a local restaurant en route to Cochin.

Meals: B/L



HOTEL | Talayar Bungalow, Munnar

This former hunting lodge of the Maharaja of Jodhpur is now a delightfully intimate retreat. Comfortable rooms and modern baths blend with the ancient aesthetics of Narlai, while the sound of gentle chanting from the many nearby temples and mosques adds a spiritual element to our stay. Chef Nate Singh prepares meals from secret recipes handed down for generations.

Days 7 & 8

Fort Cochin to the Backwaters of Alleppy

Today you'll start in the Mattancherri area of Fort Cochin, a jumble of antique, spice and souvenir shops that leads to the synagogue, the oldest in India. Later, you'll meet up with your guide and continue back to the hotel, stopping along the way on Bazaar Street, famous for its spices. Explore Palace Road, which captures India's multiculturalism. The street is an amalgam of various Indian communities and your guide will explain their distinctive practices, which contribute to India's vast diversity. Have lunch at the Grand Hotel, famous for its Kerala Fish Curry served with mountain grown brown rice. Later, you will walk the narrow roads of an area of Cochin called the Heritage Zone. There are many architectural styles that reflect the many cultures that live and have lived here. Visit the harbour and watch the fishermen launch the Chinese Fishing nets; in the narrow alleys of the old city, browse antique and book shops; stumble upon hip art galleries exhibiting local talent, and have a drink in one of the many trendy cafés.

Meals: B/L



HOTEL | Malabar House, Fort Cochin

In the heart of historical Fort Cochin, this boutique heritage hotel is ideally located for sightseeing and shopping. Featuring 17 unique rooms and suites, The Malabar House seamlessly combines tradition and contemporary design, while tradition finds itself at a crossroads with innovation at the hotel's gourmet restaurant—one of the finest seafood restaurants in the South.

Days 9 & 10

Kumarakom and the famous winding canals of Alleppey

This morning you will drive to Kumarakom for a two-night cruise on the famous Kerala backwaters on your luxury boat. After boarding, your cruise sets sail along the main waterway of Vembanad Lake and enters the Alleppey Canal. Lunch will be on board, where we'll enjoy some cultural performances.

This morning you will be able to observe the rich life along these 'water highways' while passing through one of the few areas in the world where farming is done below sea level. Later you'll have the opportunity to get up close in a traditional rice barge, which can navigate the more narrow sections of the backwaters.

Meals: B/L/D



HOTEL | Oberoi Vrinda, Alleppey

The Oberoi Motor Vessel Vrinda is an exclusive Backwater Vessel with eight tastefully appointed Deluxe Cabins, all with king size beds and large picture windows overlooking the lake. Wake up to the backwaters almost at level with your view and feel the calmness while the world floats by. The Cabins are elegantly designed with timber flooring. Each has its own private and well-appointed bathroom with shower.

Day 11

Farewells

We'll make our way back to the airport for your flight to Cochin, stopping along the way at the Folk Art Museum. Lunch today will be in the home of Mrs. Laila Manuran, a former professor of political science who has now opened her home to hungry travellers. We have arranged day rooms to use before your flights home. Safe travels!

Meals: B

The Details

Price from: US\$7,750 per person based on 4 travellers

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LEVEL OF ACTIVITY

This trip is rated Moderate to Challenging.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- * All hotel accommodation
- * Meals as indicated with wine (as selected by B&R)
- * Services of B&R guide(s) and support van
- * Use of two lightweight, telescoping walking sticks
- * Detailed maps, route suggestions and water bottle
- * All special events and private tours
- * All transportation from rendezvous to drop-off
- * All baggage transportation
- * All gratuities for baggage, porters and hotel service

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- * International flights
- * Cancellation insurance
- * Items of a personal nature
- * Gratuity for your B&R guide(s)

Next Steps

READY TO BOOK? Call or email us with any remaining questions and to reserve your dates (1-800-387-1147), or consult your travel professional. Once you are booked, you will receive a confirmation package containing detailed information to help you prepare for your trip.

TRAVEL SERVICES Once you have confirmed your trip, our Travel Services department is available to assist you with flights, pre-night hotels, airport transfers and other aspects of getting to and from your trip. Some fees may be associated with these services.

Please note that your final itinerary may vary slightly from this one as we continuously research and develop each trip, customizing your experience to match your interests and tastes. Inclement weather—though we'd like to think there won't be any—may also necessitate minor alterations. ©2014 Butterfield & Robinson Inc.