

Kerala for Family – Wellness & Spa | 13 Days



This is a special story created for discerning family travelers through the Nature of Kerala with a special inclusion of Madurai Meenakshi Temple in Tamilnadu. We visit the two southern states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, both with distinctive cultures and contrasting scenery. Kerala is a true tropical paradise enjoys unique geographical features like an equable climate, serene beaches, tranquil stretches of unique backwater canals, amazing hill stations, exquisite wildlife, sprawling tea plantations, unending spice gardens and many more.

This trail takes you through the most sought after attractions and experiences through Kerala along with an exclusive visit to Meenakshi temple in Madurai. You will get to know so close the local community and their lifestyle, varied cuisine and the local traditions. Some exquisite strolls and treks are also a highlight of this tour. The climax comes as the lagoons of Kerala are cruised on a traditional houseboat before relaxing on the sweeping Marari Beach with an endless vista of sand and surf. You will never forget the local life experiences you come across during the tour.

Trip Highlights

- Kathakali-The Dance drama of Kerala
- Colonial tour of Cochin
- Country canoe cruise with farm lunch prepare by village women
- Witness enchanting manmade architecture in the ancient temples of Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram and Pondicherry
- Spice Farm visit with Farm lunch

- Exclusive visit to the Dolmen site at Marayoor
- Visit to the Tribal village
- Tea plantation trekking with Tea Factory visit
- Exclusive colonial lunch at a Tea Bungalow
- Full day guided trekking with bamboo rafting in Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary
- Boating in Periyar Sanctuary
- Visit to Meenakshi Temple
- Organic Farm visit with Farm lunch
- Bullock Cart Ride
- Tuk-Tuk Ride

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Cochin

Welcome to India! Upon arrival in Cochin a *travel-to-nature Asia* guide/representative will be at the airport to greet and take us to our hotel. Please look out for your name-card once you exit out of arrival area.

Day to relax after long flight. Evening visit a traditional Kathakali Theatre to watch a live performance. Overnight stay in Cochin.

Cochin the queen of the Arabian Sea is one of the most interesting cities of India and has one of the finest natural harbors in the world. A root-conscious people of Kerala have preserved their past not only in the form of history books but also in the form of monuments and palaces. Places, palaces and institutions of historic value are being preserved conscientiously.

Accommodation: The Tower House-17th Century

Day 2: In Cochin | Backwater Cruise

Morning, after breakfast, we proceed for a village backwater cruise with lunch.

In the afternoon we will come back to Cochin for sightseeing. This tour will be a combination of a Tuk-

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tuk ride and a short walking tour. There is time to wander round the tiny back streets of Jew Town hunting for souvenirs in the many antique shops and warehouses. Overnight at the Hotel.

Village backwater Cruise: A journey in a country boat into the pristine purity of a typical village backwater of Kerala, goes through the zigzagging narrow canals and paddy fields fringed with coconut palms, watch rare birds, country boat making, a natural fish farm where you can go fishing. You will also witness coir making, toddy tapping. While strolling through this amazing village, you will watch the common life of the villagers for their livelihood. You will see them fishing in the river, the women do the coir making, a toddy tapper who does his job as a routine, men climbing the coconut trees to pluck the coconuts, later peeling the same to prepare to dry and make oil extraction possible. Its all about a life experience which you will cherish throughout your life.



Cochin Sightseeing: St Francis Church, built in 1510 by friars brought to India by Vasco da Gama, is the first European church built in India and is the site where Vasco da Gama was buried. The Jewish Synagogue was built in 1568, Chinese hand-painted tiles are one of the attractions. This, the only Synagogue in India has a nostalgic past of a Jewish Diaspora. The "Dutch Palace" was built in the 1550s; the palace contains excellent mythological murals and a rare example of traditional Keralite flooring - a subtle mix of burnt coconut shells, lime, plant juices and egg whites - which gives the effect of polished marble.

Fort Cochin & Mattancherry are twin cities carry a flavor of the colonial era. Jewish, Arabs, Portuguese British all came to Cochin for trading and Mattancherry was the spice trade headquarters due to the proximity of Cochin Port. While Fort Cochin became the administrative headquarters, Mattancherry maintained its trading status. The colonial stature and buildings still make Fort Cochin a favourite destination for tourists. It's getting an upgrade once it's declared as the first heritage city in India. Fort Cochin was also a part of Muziris route. It will be interesting to know that around 13 religious communities are harmoniously living in Fort Cochin and Mattancherry. Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Jains, Sikhs etc. are few among them.

Accommodation: The Tower House – 17th Century
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 3: Drive Cochin – Munnar (160 km | 4-5 hr)

Morning, after breakfast, we proceed to Munnar, known as nature lover's paradise. We will drive through Midland crops like Rubber, arecnut, pineapple etc. En route stop at Mistletoe home stay for a Spice Farm visit followed by lunch.

On arrival in Munnar, we will check in to our Resort. Early evening will go for a guided nature walk. Overnight at the Resort.

Munnar, breathtakingly beautiful - a haven of peace and tranquility - an idyllic tourist destination in God's own country with unending expanses of tea plantations, pristine valleys and mountains, exotic species of flora and fauna in its wild sanctuaries and forests with aroma of spice scented cool air. Munnar has all these and more. It's the place we would love to visit. It's the place we would wish never to leave. Set at an altitude of 1600m. in Idukki district, situated at the confluence of three mountain streams, Munnar was the favored summer resort of the erstwhile British rulers in the colonial days. Sprawling tea plantations, picturesque towns, winding lanes, trekking and holiday facilities makes Munnar a holiday resort. Among the exotic flora found in the forests and grasslands here is the Neelakurinji a flower, which bathes the hills in blue once every twelve

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years. Munnar also has the highest peak in South India - Anamudi (2,695 m), dominates the skyline and the many smaller peaks are a walker's paradise.

Accommodation: Devonshire Greens

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 4: Day Excursion to Marayoor (1.5 hrs)

Full day guided tour of Munnar to enjoy the nature around. After an early breakfast, by 8 AM we will be taken to Marayoor Village for guided walks through the nice lively village, Sandalwood Forest, tribal areas etc. We will watch sugarcane making units, farm lands, walk to the Mount of the Dead, a world-famous Megalithic site with dolmens, dolmenoid and dolmenoid cists. etc. By noon we will be brought to Thalayar Tea Estate Bungalow for a colonial lunch.

Afternoon our Naturalist guide will take us for a nice Nature walk through the tea plantation followed by a visit to the Tea factory. Return to Munnar for overnight stay.

Marayoor valley

Visit to a rock cut temple, ancient inscriptions etc. Walk to the Mount of the Dead, a world-famous Megalithic site with dolmens, dolmenoid and dolmenoid cists. Visit to a traditional sugarcane farm and Jaggery (black sugar) manufacturing. Marayoor is famous for its Sandalwood Forest which is protected by the Forest Department.

Accommodation: Devonshire Greens

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 5: Drive Munnar - Madurai (165 km | 5-6 hrs)

Leaving Kerala behind we drive to Madurai, an ancient city, more than 2,500 years old, known as the 'Athens of the East', for overnight stay. In the afternoon we tour Madurai and in the evening visit to Meenakshi Temple to watch closing ceremony.

For dinner this evening we might want to opt in for a nice rooftop restaurant, which in addition to allowing

us to sample some of the specialties of the region, offer fantastic views over the city. Overnight at Madurai.

Meenakshi Temple

In the Ashta Shakti Mandapam inside the temple, the sculpted pillars tell the story of the beautiful princess of Madurai and her marriage to Lord Siva. The pillars of the Mandapam are decorated with scenes from the wedding of Meenakshi and Sundareswarar. The life of Madurai revolves around the Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple. This magnificently carved temple is the main attraction of Madurai and its huge Gopurams towers over the city. Meenakshi temple has a thousand pillared 'Mandapam'. Precisely there are 985 pillars and each of them is delicately and exquisitely carved. Among these are the musical pillars, which produce music when tapped. Surprisingly, these musical pillars are carved out of a single granite rock. The temple has been a hub of Tamil culture and has been sponsoring literature, art, music, and dance in the region for a long time.

Accommodation: Fortune Pandiyar

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 6: Drive Madurai – Harvest Farms - Periyar/Thekkady (140 km | 3-4 hrs)

Leaving Madurai we drive in the morning to the small bustling village of Thekkady, from where we visit the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, one of the largest parks in India. The drive from Madurai is spectacular as the road climbs through the Western Ghats and we have fantastic views across Tamil Nadu.

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On the way we stop at Harvest Organic Farm for a guided walk. From the main road, we will be welcomed to drive through the village road to the farm. We will also be given a bullock cart ride experience en route to the farm. A Garden farm lunch will be served. Later guided walk through the farm. Be early evening continue our travel to our hotel in Periyar. Overnight at Hotel.

Periyar - Conjures up images of elephants, chains of hill and spice scented plantations. Here, in the crisp, cool air of the Western Ghats we will see a lot of wildlife and observe the way of life of simple mountain people. Periyar Tiger Reserve is one of the finest wildlife reserves in India, and spread across the entire district are picturesque plantations and hill towns that hold great opportunities for treks and mountain walks.

Harvest Fresh Farm is a certified Organic farm located in the heart of beautiful Cumbum Valley in Tamilnadu State amidst cloud kissed mountains, bubbling streams and lush farmlands. You will stroll among pomegranate, papaya and mango orchards, watch the bees and its saplings, composting methods, livestock and herbal gardens. Climb the watch tower for a commanding view of the valley and to sum up with a sumptuous meal of local cuisine made from home grown or locally sourced ingredients.

Accommodation: Greenwoods

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 7: Explore Periyar

Today we will be exploring the Sanctuary on foot. It will be a guided program by the forest Department and there are chances of closure of the Sanctuary between April & June due to the fear of wild fire etc. At 07.45 AM we have to report at the starting point where a packed breakfast & lunch are given to each passenger to be consumed during meal intervals. The program also involves a Bamboo raft in the Periyar Lake. This will be a nice program to watch possible wildlife in the sanctuary. Evening return our hotel and later we may opt to go for shopping spree. Overnight stay in Periyar.

The Periyar sanctuary is one of the best in the country for watching and photographing unique flora & fauna. A cruise through the waters of Periyar Lake around which the wildlife sanctuary is situated, offers lots of photo opportunities. This is the only sanctuary in India where you can have the unique experience of viewing wildlife at close quarters from the safety of a boat on the lake. The greatest attraction of Periyar remains the large herds of wild elephants that come down to the lake's edge. Tigers are sighted when the forest water holes dry up and these animals come and drink water from the river.

Evergreen and semi-evergreen forests constitute the major part of the Periyar Tiger Reserve. The rest of the area is a combination of moist deciduous forests and grasslands. Of the 27 tiger reserves in India, the Periyar Tiger Reserve is the oldest in the country and the largest in the State. The abundant wildlife here attracts a lot of visitors. Apart from being a recognised breeding ground for tigers, the reserve has also been identified as the best place for researching elephantine life. The tiger population in the area is estimated to be about 40. Though it is difficult to sight them, visitors often spot pugmarks and scats around the reserve. Thirty-five species of mammals have been identified here. They include rare and endangered species. A boat ride on the lake is a great way to spot the wild elephants, the Gaur, the Sambar and so on. While the Gaur is the largest of the bovines here, the Sambar, the largest deer in India, is the main prey of the tiger and the wild dog. Apart from these, there are wild pigs, Malabar Giant Squirrels, Small Travancore Flying Squirrels, jungle cats, sloth bears etc. The endangered species in the area include Nilgiri Langurs and the Lion-tailed

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Macaque, that is usually seen only in the evergreen interiors. Nilgiri Tahrs are also found in the reserve, especially in the higher rocky areas. Salim Ali's fruit bat, one of the rarest bats, is also reported to have been found in the area. The stripe-necked mongoose, usually found in the semi-evergreen and evergreen forests, the extremely rare Nilgiri Marten - the only species of marten found in southern India- and endemic mustelids are also seen here.

There are about 265 species of birds in the Periyar reserve including migrant birds. The birds include raptors, water birds, galliform birds, pigeons, wood peckers, darters, kingfishers, golden orioles, Brahmini kites, cormorants and passerines, as well as a large flock of the Great Pied Hornbill and the Ceylon Frogmouth. The endemic species include the Malabar Grey Hornbill, the Nilgiri Wood Pigeon, the Blue-winged Parakeet, the Nilgiri Flycatcher, the small Sunbird and the White-bellied Blue Flycatcher. Other birds found in the area are the Black Baza, Forest Eagle Owl, Nilgiri Thrush, Little Spider Hunter, Rufous bellied hawk eagle etc. An interesting sight is that of water fowl perched on the dead trees protruding out onto the lake. Other aquatic birds include the Indian Darter and the Black-Necked Stork. Woodland birds, owls etc. can also be seen in the forest.

There are 1966 varieties of flowering plants, including angiosperms. Both dicots and monocots have been included in this count. There are about 171 grass species and 140 species of orchids in the region. The richness of the flower wealth is so outstanding that it constitutes more than 50 percent of the entire flower wealth of Kerala, which is about 3800 species. Teak, Rosewood, Terminalia, Eucalyptus, Sandalwood, Jacaranda, Mango, Jamun, Tamarind, Banyan, Pipal, Plumeria, Gulmohar and bamboo are some of the trees found here. The three main endemic plants are *Mucuna pruriens thekkadiensis*, *Habenaria periyarensis* and *Syzygium periyarensis*. Rare plants like the *Podocarpus wallichianus*, the only South Indian conifer, are also found in the reserve. More than 350 medicinal plants, including trees, shrubs and herbs, have been identified at the Periyar Tiger Reserve, mainly in the evergreen and moist deciduous forests. Plants belonging to the family of Fabaceae and Euphorbiaceae are the major ones among them. Glory Lily (*Gloriosa superba*) and Kino Tree

(*Pterocarpus marsupium*) are two plants with medicinal value found here.

Accommodation: Greenwood

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8: Drive Periyar - Kumarakom (127 km | 4.5 hrs)

In the morning, before breakfast we go on a boat cruise on the lake. This is an ideal way to get close to the animals and we have the opportunity of spotting elephant, otter, wild pig and buffalo. There is also an abundance of bird life - kingfishers, storks and hornbills are the most commonly spotted.

Later after breakfast, drive to Kumarakom, which is famous for its backwater and scenic beauty, sprinkled with traditional houseboats, country crafts, rural lifestyles and Tranquility. We may opt to go for a rejuvenating Ayurvedic Massage. Also we go for a village walk through the nearby villages. Overnight at the Resort.



The slender coconut palms standing here, there and everywhere, its never ending paddy fields, meandering lagoons and backwaters, mangroves nesting birds of a hundred varieties can peacefully calm and invigorate your mind with renewed inspiration for your vocation and life. And that is the pristine beauty of Kumarakom.

Kumarakom is a cluster of little islands on the Vembanad Lake and a picturesque, clean village like most places in Kerala. The Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary

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is spread across 14 acres, the bird sanctuary is a favourite haunt of migratory birds and an ornithologist's paradise. Egrets, darters, herons, teal, waterfowl, cuckoo, wild duck and migratory birds like the Siberian stork that live in flocks are a fascination for visitors. The best way to watch the birds of the Kumarakom sanctuary is a boat trip round the islands.

Accommodation: Abad Whispering Palms

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 9: Board houseboat for backwater cruise

We will enjoy our breakfast at the resort. Later check out and drive to Alleppey to board our exclusive Houseboat at 12:30 PM for a cruise through the backwater villages followed by overnight stay on board. Our meals are cooked and served on board. Explore the amazing backwater life of Kerala! Overnight at the Houseboat.



What is truly magical about a houseboat is the breathtaking view of the untouched and otherwise inaccessible rural Kerala that it offers. The houseboats have all the creature comforts of a good hotel including furnished bedrooms, modern toilets, cozy living rooms, a kitchen where are cooked on board and supplemented with fresh fish from the backwaters. Today, the tradition is still continued and the food from the local cuisine is served by the Kuttanad locals, on board. The name Backwaters brings you the very thought of Houseboats. Food and leisurely times spent on-board with the feeling and privacy of house as well as enjoying the natural beauty. A Cruise amidst marvelous mangrove forests, captivating coconut canopies, swaying palms,

mangrove forests, pulsating paddy fields sprinkled with enchanting waterways and canals decked with white lilies, can be quite a rejuvenating experience for the weary traveler. Enjoying a cruise in these backwaters is not to be missed, as it leaves you feeling fully rejuvenated. The banks of these backwaters in Kerala are the most enchanting picnic spots. We get to experience the native way of living. The experience on the Houseboat is not the one to be explained by words. Its to be lived and evolved by oneself.

Accommodation: Alleppey Houseboat

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10: Drive Alleppey – Marari Beach (1 hr)

We will enjoy our breakfast on board. Later, at 9 AM checkout and drive to a heritage home in Alleppey for a cookery show followed by lunch.

Later proceed to Marari, a relatively quiet beach paradise of Kerala. On arrival check in at the resort on the Beach. Rest of the day at leisure on the beach. We may opt to go for an Ayurvedic Massage or a village walk. Overnight stay in Marari Beach.

Kerala has a distinctive cuisine, very unusual and different from the rest of India. Cooking in Kerala is all about discoveries, aromas and colors. Kerala cuisine is very hot and spicy and offers several gastronomic opportunities to those willing to experiment with the local cuisine. Traditionally, in Kerala food is served on a banana leaf. One has to take food with right hand. This cookery demo is not just being in the kitchen, will give you hands on experience, you'll learn to prepare 3-4 variety of Kerala's delicacies in a friendly, relaxed, informal environment. Each dish will be demonstrated, prepared and cooked.

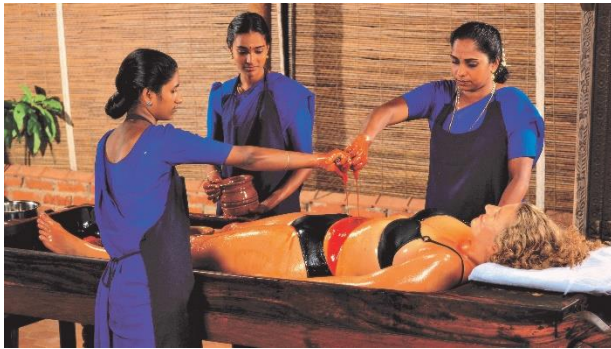
Marari originates from "Mararikulam", one of the local fishing villages, where life still goes on much as it did a hundred years ago, with the men going out to sea each day to earn a living bringing in the daily catch. Completely new to the holiday maker. Marari offers endless miles of superb sand beaches backed by swaying palms, virgin territory where you can

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experience the local charm/and traditional Kerala Hospitality at it's best. Marari Beach is an endless vista of sand and surf, but it is more. An authentic experience of the world of Kerala's traditional fishing villages, and a recreation of an ancient, harmonious way of life. The village of Mararikulam lies on a forgotten shore, midway up the Malabar coast, where the Indian Ocean finally decides that it has now become the Arabian Sea.

Accommodation: Abad Turtle Beach Resort

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 11-12: Marari Beach

Two full day for relaxing on the beach. Marari Beach is an endless vista of sand and surf, but it is more... An authentic experience of Kerala's traditional fishing villages, and a re-creation of an ancient, harmonious way of life. We may opt to take an Ayurvedic Massage or visit the fishermen villages. By evening it may interesting to visit the local temple to watch the local crowd coming for worship and socialization. Overnight stay in Marari Beach.

Accommodation: Abad Turtle Beach Resort

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 13: Drive Marari Beach to Cochin airport (87 km | 2.5 hrs) | Depart Cochin

We leave Marari and drive to Cochin airport which is about 90 km and takes roughly 2 hours. Upon arrival at Cochin airport, check in for your homeward-bound flight.

Meal: Breakfast

Includes

- Airport (pick up/drop off) transfers by private A/C vehicle
- Twin-Sharing room accommodation at all hotel/resort/ as mentioned
- Daily breakfast throughout the trip, all meals as mentioned in the itinerary
- Services of a local English speaking guide for sightseeing tours
- Hiking inside the Periyar National park with Bamboo Raft Crossing (packed lunch included)
- One boat ride on Lake Periyar inside Periyar National Park for about 2 hours
- Boat trip (Country Boat) into back waters around Cochin for day (packed lunch included)
- One Kathakali Classical Dance show at one of the theaters in Cochin
- All sightseeing and long-distance transportation in a private air-conditioned vehicle (cars/SUVs or mini/micro-van etc. depending on group size). This includes toll taxes, parking, allowance for the driver, outstation overnight charges for the driver
- Monument entrance fees

Excludes

- International flight tickets
- Visa fee
- Travel insurance
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal clothing and equipment
- Tips for trip leader/guide, driver, hotel staff and porters
- Items of personal nature such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, laundry, and other unforeseen expenses
- Items/services not listed in "included"

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- Extra expenses/payment for 'Optional' activities/programs if participated

Accommodation

The Tower House-17th Century, Cochin

The Tower House, marking the spot of a 17th-century lighthouse, is one of the few Kochi Hotels that sits facing the Chinese fishing nets. The scallop-walled twin-house looks rather like a ship, The Tower House is one of the best heritage hotels in Kochi, especially if you are looking for something unique, luxurious and experiential.

Devonshire Greens, Munnar

Devonshire Greens is a leisure hotel overlooking the endless tea gardens of Munnar. Our resort enhances this experience by letting you connect with nature throughout your stay here. Wake up to the beautiful views of endless tea gardens against the background of the picture-perfect hills of Munnar. The silence of our resort lets you connect to the rhythm of nature.



Fortune Pandiyan, Madurai

Fortune Pandiyan, a Madurai hotel, features 57 elegantly appointed spacious rooms including 11 Standard Rooms, 12 Deluxe Rooms, 26 Fortune Club Rooms, 3 Suites, and 5 Exclusive Club Rooms considered the best among all the hotels in Madurai. The rooms offer a wide range of modern amenities to suit the needs of the discerning traveler.

Greenwoods, Thekkady

Greenwoods is a luxury nature resort in Kerala located in Thekkady. Plan your visit to the verdant locale surrounded by dense forests and be settled comfortably amongst the top 5 star resorts in Thekkady. Pack and plan your adventure towards Greenwoods and let's pin the serene land of Thekkady, transforming your visit into an exhilarating



experience.

Abad Whispering Palms, Kumarakom

Abad Whispering Palms is located on the banks of the pristine Vembanad Lake and offers a perfect escape for the modern traveller. Set in a beautiful natural environment that comprises a private lake, an infinity swimming pool, and three private plunge pools with a view of the backwaters, - a perfect blend to relieve stress and anxiety of everyday life.

Alleppey Houseboat

Houseboats in Kerala were traditionally cargo boats that carried rice, spices and other commodities, which now are transformed into luxury boats complete with bedrooms, kitchen, living area, bathrooms and other amenities. Today, these allow travellers to enjoy the breath-taking beauty of Alappuzha while gliding along and exploring the tranquil backwaters - an experience of a life time.

Abad Turtle Beach Resort, Marari

Abad Turtle Beach Resort in Mararikulam, is a beautiful beachfront resort that overlooks the white sandy beach and has a rivulet flowing on one side. The resort, located very close to the coastal village of Mararikulam, is spread across an area of 13 acres of

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land with 30 premium cottages. This is a premium resort with a private beach in Marari.

Group/Individual

On this trip you will be traveling privately with your family & friends. Our representative/tour partner will look after your transfers to and from the airport and will be around to answer other questions you may have about your trip.

Accommodation – Hotel, Resort

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a fine heritage hotel in another or a family-run guesthouse or lodges in a smaller town. Accommodation in remote areas tend to be basic and may not have western amenities.

Single Accommodation

Single (room) supplement is provided on request (single supplement charge applies) and are subject to availability.

Food & Transport

All breakfast, 2 lunches and 9 dinners are included.

Generally, you can eat out very cheaply in India. Where food is not included, you should allow at least 1,800 rupees (approximately Euro 20 & US\$22) per day for lunch and dinner. However, if you choose to dine in fine/expensive restaurants please allocate more than our suggested amount.

Please note, service in restaurants can be quite slow.

For airport, sightseeing transfers, and for long drives we use a private air-con car, jeep, van depending upon group size. Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

Weather

Generally, the best time to visit India is from December to February, when it is warm during daytime and cool at night in most areas of India. December marks the beginning of the peak travel season with higher-priced accommodation and flights.

It starts to get hot from March and the temperature reaches its average high point of 45°C (113°F) in May. If you can bear the heat, traveling India from April to May, you can expect the benefits of smaller crowds as well as big promotions from hotels and airlines (usually 50% off).

India's rainy season starts from June and lasts until September. North India is less affected by downpours than central and southern parts. You could still enjoy a good experience if you visit north Indian destinations like Delhi, Agra, Jaipur and other Rajasthan areas. Many national parks are closed because of floods and landslides. Goa becomes a "ghost city", with few travelers and many beach resorts closed. Ladakh, located in the far north is cool, and little affected by the rainy season, and it starts to welcome its high travel time from June to August.

Rain starts to ease from the middle of September. In October, most areas of India have dry weather. Though it is still hot, it feels much more comfortable than in May. Traveling in October and November, you'll not be drenched, while enjoying better deals than in December-February.

Baggage Allowance

At time of writing the standard weight limit is one checked baggage on Qatar Airways is 25kg (55lb) and hand baggage 7kg (15lbs). We recommend packing only one piece of checked baggage. Luggage allowances for both hand and checked luggage are subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure.

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ESSENTIAL/PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Passport & Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for EU passport holders, and other nationalities should check with the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Visas are required if you are German and for most other nationalities. Visa information changes regularly for India; for the latest information on applying for a visa please follow these links for more information.

<https://indianembassyberlin.gov.in/pages?id=Mg,,&su bid=MTQ>,

Please note: Visa regulations can change without notice, therefore please check the current regulations or contact us.

Vaccination & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad.

There are no mandatory vaccination requirements for this trip. Recommended vaccinations for this trip are: Polio, Tetanus, Diphtheria, Typhoid, Hepatitis A. The risk of malaria on this trip is slight, but you may wish to consult your GP/Family Doctor or travel health clinic for further advice. Dengue fever and/or Chikungunya are known risks in places visited on this trip. Both are tropical viral diseases spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available for either, and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We

recommend you take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites. The above information can change at short notice; as we are not qualified to answer all your questions about travel health we strongly recommend you contact your Medical Professional or a Travel Health Clinic prior to departure for up-to date information.

Local Time

GMT + 5 hours and 30 minutes

Electricity

230/240 volts AC, 50 Hz. There are recharging facilities at most of the hotels, the electricity supply is not 100% reliable but it is usually only off for short periods of time.

Money

The national currency of India is the Indian Rupee (INR), with an exchange rate at the time of publication of approximately 89 to the Euro and 82 to the US\$. It is illegal to import or export rupees. Do not accept torn or (very) dirty Indian banknotes from banks or in change as they will almost certainly not be accepted as legal tender in India. Please ask for low denomination notes of 100, 200 or 500 Rupees as 2000 Rupee notes can sometimes be difficult to use out of Delhi. You can change money back from Rupees into Euro or Dollars at Delhi airport (before going through security), but you must produce an exchange receipt showing that you changed money in India. You are advised to bring most of your money in cash as you may have difficulty changing travellers cheques outside Delhi. It makes no difference whether you bring Euro or US Dollars. You should change your money on arrival at Delhi either at the hotel or airport (please note that the hotel often gives a better rate than the airport). It is possible to change cash in Ladakh. You will need approximately €200-€250 for extra meals and tipping for the whole trip.

ATM | Credit Cards

There are ATMs in Cochin and other major cities. Please do not rely wholly on ATM machines as often they are

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broken or run out of cash. Credit cards are accepted in larger shops in major cities.

Extra Expenses & Spending Money

You will need to bring some extra money to cover drinks, laundry, souvenirs and any other personal expense, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Though it totally depends on individual but generally an approximate amount of US\$250 per person, per week should be sufficient (more if you enjoy a few beers); however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount. Or if you are the one frugal with money probably allocating less would also suffice.

India has very good opportunities for shopping, especially for locally made goods, and in Delhi local guides may well offer to take you to emporiums as well as workshops where these goods are made. Many people find this a great opportunity to buy local handicrafts, silk, jewelry, carpets etc. Guides will often assume that visitors will want to go shopping, it is very much part of the culture, however if you do not wish to go, please make this clear to your local guide at the time.

Optional Tours may be offered in some city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each optional tour/activity will be arranged locally by our local partner/guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

Tipping

Tipping is of course entirely at your discretion, but it is customary in India. Tipping can be an awkward affair especially when you are not familiar with the country. Your leader will help with tipping and will provide a list of suggested tips. This will include tips for drivers, hotel porters and other hotel staff, local sightseeing guides, and if trekking will include camp staff such as guide, assistants, cooks and pony men. Sometimes your

leader will collect a kitty during the trip and sometimes they will collect the tips towards the end of the trip (occasionally for very small groups the leader may need to collect a little more than the suggested amount). We suggest you allow Rs 6,000 (approx. €60 -70 / \$65-75) for this trip. Please try to tip in local currency.

Tipping of the local leader is not included in the above and is at your discretion. However, we suggest around Rs1000-2000 (approx.€11-25 /US \$12-25) per person for the leader depend upon the group size.

Itinerary Change

In case of some unusual events/incidents the order of programs (sightseeing, excursions etc.) might have to change in order to accommodate the local situations. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements while maintaining the overall integrity of your trip.

The domestic airlines (if your program have one) may change their schedule frequently and, in such cases, our local partner/guide will inform you about the changes.

Travel Insurance

We highly recommend to choose/get an insurance plan/policy that covers your needs. And please make sure to keep/carry a hard-copy of your travel insurance documents on your person while on tour. It's prudent to check thoroughly the inclusions and procedure to file claims prior to purchasing insurance coverage. *travel-to-nature Asia* will not be responsible for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to purchase appropriate travel insurance from the date of booking.

Public Holidays

During major Indian public holidays such as India's Republic Day 26th Jan, the Holi (Colors) Festival (generally falls around March), Diwali (sometime in Oct-Nov) etc. some business will be closed and air and ground transportation may be affected. Tourist attractions sites may get overly crowded. But it's a good trade off as you will get to experience India

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more intimately.

Dress Code

Though modern-day Indian have become more liberal to dresses they wear, however, as a tourist we advise you to follow dress codes specially while visiting temples or mosques. Just dressing modestly and wearing non-revealing cloths should be fine. Women might also consider carrying a shawl in their daypack (this could be a sarong or light scarf) which you can wear over your shoulders and heads as a courtesy or just show respects. Religious sites and homes throughout India – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter.

Important Information

On all guided trips although our leaders/guides are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorize them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.
