



## Kerala and the Southern Highlights

18 days

Fully Inclusive from the UK

South India is vastly different from North India; both culturally and geographically. Starting in the colonial city of Chennai, the tour combines lush mountain scenery in Mysore and Coonoor with the sandy beaches of Kovalam. Also included are the tea and spice plantations in Munnar, nature spotting at the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary and an unforgettable cruise along the tranquil backwaters in Kerala.

### Fully Inclusive price includes:

- International flights and current taxes
- Domestic transportation
- Accommodation
- All meals (excluding drinks)
- Touring with guides and entrance fees
- Visa fees for UK passport holders

### Welcome to Wendy Wu Tours

India continues to amaze, fascinate and thrill our passengers, many of whom have travelled to one country in Asia with us, then another, year after year. We urge you to keep in mind all the rewards, as well as challenges of travelling in a country with a history, culture and attitude so unlike your own.

A typical day's sightseeing may include the bustle and noise of a city street, sights and smells of a local market and interacting with the locals. Travelling in India requires patience as potential delays are to be expected due to standards of service. There is a low level of English spoken throughout India, so your local guides or National Escort will be indispensable during your trip.

Almost everything will be different to what you may be used to. We have found that our passengers who embark with a sense of humour and adventure, who accept that things do not always go to plan, are those who find their experience most rewarding. It is essential that all passengers recognise the demands of factors such as basic facilities and cultural differences they may encounter in some areas.

Book now on **0844 499 3899** visit [www.wendywutours.co.uk](http://www.wendywutours.co.uk) or see your preferred travel agent.



### Your Tour Dossier

This document is designed to be read in conjunction with the other pre-departure information provided by Wendy Wu Tours including the tour itinerary as described in our brochure and/or website. It aims to provide a straightforward description of the physical activities involved in sightseeing or travelling during the tour.

If there are any particular challenges, from the length of time spent on your feet, the length of drives and flights, to the standard of remote accommodation; they will be explained here.

All passengers must read this document to ensure the itinerary is suitable for their interests and physical capabilities. This is not your final itinerary and therefore does not mention all the sites visited.

## Kerala and the Southern Highlights - Medium Paced Tour

These tours are not strenuous but do require higher levels of fitness. A typical tour may include longer periods of sightseeing on foot, climbing of stairs and getting on and off boats will be necessary. These tours may involve longer periods of driving; sometimes on poorly maintained roads; as well as some easy hiking. Some Medium Paced Tours may involve several days at altitude.

Anyone with a good level of fitness should be able to complete this itinerary. Of course our local guides always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance, but they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you do have mobility difficulties, please contact us for our range of private tours which are more flexible and can better cater for individual needs.

NB: Please note that times and distances listed in the tour dossier are approximate.

### Day 1-2: UK/Chennai

On day 2, you will be met in the airport arrivals hall by your Local Guide/National Escort, together with any other passengers from your group who may be arriving at a similar time. Transfer approx. 30 minutes to your hotel and check-in.

### Day 3: Chennai.

After a late rise this morning, today's sightseeing involves approx. 4 to 5 hours on foot. Please note that parking is not allowed at Marina Beach so you will not be able to disembark here, just drive past it.

### Day 4: Chennai/Kanchipuram/Mamallapuram

Drive 64km south to Kanchipuram for easy sightseeing and shopping time. Then drive approx. 1.5 hours (66km) to Mamallapuram; at the rock carvings sightseeing involves approx. 2 hours on foot. Drive approx. 1 hour 45 minutes (50km) back to Chennai.

### Day 5: Chennai/Bangalore

This morning we have a very early rise usually at 430am to catch the train to Bangalore, the journey takes approx. 4.5 hours. You will be given a simple, light breakfast as well as beverages whilst on the train. However if you require additional food, please purchase the day prior. From Bangalore station, transfer to your hotel and check-in if your rooms are available. There will be easy sightseeing this afternoon.

### Day 6: Bangalore/Hassan

This morning, you will change to a smaller bus. Check-out from the hotel and drive approx. 3.5 hours (163km) to Sravanabelagola Jain pilgrimage centre— please see appropriate dress section below. Sightseeing to see Bahubali Statue involves approx. 2.5 hours on foot. You will need to climb some steps that are not necessarily steep, but are uneven and sometimes slippery; there are also sections without handrails. This is quite a long walk in the open, with little shade available, however you will still be required to remove your shoes. Bring a pair of old, thick socks to protect your feet, drinking water and sun protection. There are sedan chairs\* that you can take one or both ways (at your own cost). Continue driving approx. 1 hour 15 minutes (50km) to Hassan. After lunch, there is further easy sightseeing before checking in at your hotel.

\*A chair borne on two poles carried by two or four people.

### Day 7: Hassan/Mysore

Drive approx. 3 hours (130km) to Mysore and commence sightseeing of Mysore Palace/Chamudi Hill with approx. 3 hours on foot. There is a temple and mosque inside the complex – refer to appropriate dress section below. Drive to your hotel and check-in overnight.

Note: Mysore Altitude- 800 to 1200m (2623 to 3346 feet)

### Day 8: Mysore/Coonoor

Drive approx. 5 to 6 hours to the beautiful hill station of Coonoor and check-in to your hotel.

Note: Coonoor altitude – 1850m (6070 feet)

### Day 9: Coonoor-Ooty (Toy Train)

Transfer a short distance to the station to board the 'toy train'. The journey to another Nilgiri Hill station – Ooty, takes approx. 1 hour and 20 minutes. Please note that the train timetable is subject to change at the last moment – your Guide/Escort will inform you of changes as they are made aware of them. There is leisurely sightseeing here including a visit to Sims Park in Coonoor, botanical garden/ boat club in Ooty. Perhaps some tour members may choose to walk further and uphill to a local village. Later, you will return to Coonoor by coach.

Note: Ooty Altitude – 2240m (7350 feet)

### Day 10: Coonoor/Munnar

Drive approx. 9 hours (310km) to Munnar – the first hour is a steep and winding descent from the highlands, a stretch of even road and then a steep ascent again to Munnar. The group bus will not be able to drive under the clearance height of the bridge, located just outside Munnar. Hotel staff will send jeeps to collect you and your luggage to take you the remaining short distance to the hotel, to check-in.

Note: Munnar Altitude – 1524m (5000 feet)

### Day 11: Munnar to Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary

After easy sightseeing at Tata Tea Museum, drive approx. 5 hours (130km) to Thekkady and the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary.

### Day 12: Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary

There is a morning boat ride today on Lake Periyar, followed by a walk to view the wildlife. There is a variety of walks on offer, generally 4 to 7km in length. If you do not wish to join

the walk, please notify your local guide and/or national escort for alternative arrangements.

**Day 13: Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary/Nedumudy**

Check-out from the hotel early this morning and drive approx. 4 hours (170km) to the small town of Nedumudy, which is another boarding point near Kumarakom. Board houseboats for sightseeing, meals and overnight accommodation.

**Day 14: Alleppey/Kochi**

Continue cruising until approx. 9am then disembark at Alleppey. Drive approx. 1.5 hours (65km) to Kochi and commence sightseeing. Sightseeing in the Fort Cochin area involves approx. 1 to 2 hours on foot and shopping time. Transfer approx. 45 minutes to your hotel and check-in.

**Day 15: Kochi**

Easy sightseeing around Kochi today.

**Day 16: Kochi/Kovalam Beach**

Drive approx. 5 hours (240km) to Kovalam Beach via Trivandrum and check-in at your hotel. Enjoy the afternoon at leisure.

**Day 17: Trivandrum day trip**

Easy sightseeing today around Trivandrum with approx. 4 to 5 hours on foot. Return to Kovalam overnight.

**Day 18: Depart Trivandrum (Kovalam)**

Today you will checkout of your hotel and transfer to the airport for your flight home.

If you are travelling on a land only basis, then you will need to make your own way to the starting hotel in Chennai on Day 2. On Day 18, you will checkout from your Trivandrum hotel, and continue as per your own arrangements.

Please refer to the Wendy Wu Tours brochure and/or website for details on departure dates, prices, itineraries, inclusions and tour extensions available as well as full booking conditions.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION****Before You Leave**

**Itinerary Changes** - The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. The schedules of the domestic airlines in India are subject to frequent changes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your Local Guide or National Escort will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Roads in India have generally been improved over recent years, but some road construction and/or weather conditions may still lengthen the driving times.

**Visas** - A visa is required for entry into India. A standard visa processing service is included in your tour cost. You will need to complete the visa application form online at: <http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/onlineapplication.html>. Once completed you will need to print the completed form, and send it to our office along with your passport and 2 passport photos per person, taken within the last 6 months, in order for our office to process your visa with the embassy. We will require all this information 8 weeks prior to departure. As per our standard visa processing service, we will have your passport for at least 4 weeks. Any passports and visa applications that require an express service, or that are received in our office less than 6 weeks prior to departure will incur a £50 per passport express fee.

In rare cases, you may be required to provide further information or documentation to the Indian embassy and/or be required to attend an interview at the embassy. If this is the case we will notify you as soon as we have been advised.

**Vaccinations and Your Health** - We recommend that you contact either your local GP or a travel doctor for advice on vaccinations and travel health. [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk) is a comprehensive website that you may also find useful.

**Climate** - Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

**Insurance** - It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

**Suggested Packing List** - A complete list will be provided with deposit documentation and your final documentation pack.

**What to Expect on Tour**

**Group Size** – All our group tours are guaranteed to run subject to a minimum number of 10 travellers and a National Escort will accompany each group of over 10. The maximum group size varies depending on the tour, but is usually no more than 18 passengers.

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**Your accommodation** - All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide.

**Alternative accommodation** - In Kerala, you will be staying overnight on board a traditional style houseboat called a kettuvallam – refer to Your Travel Guide’s accommodation section for more information. The supply of electricity is limited on board the kettavallum houseboat.

**Rail journeys** - Getting on and off the trains in India can be quite disordered and amusing as passengers will start boarding well before people have finished getting off! If your group is disembarking at a stop that is not the end of the line, the train will only stop for 10mins and you must have your luggage ready and by your side a few minutes before the train pulls into the station. Refer to Your Travel Guide’s Transport and Eating in India sections for more information.

**Meals** - All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from the groups’ arrival until the day of departure. Our schedule of meals is designed so that you can experience the local dishes, their individual flavours as well as the different ways they are prepared and cooked throughout India.

**Tipping** - As with most countries, tipping is a recognised part of life in India. For our passengers’ convenience we ask for a specified amount to be paid at the beginning of our group tours to cover tipping for guides, drivers, restaurant staff etc. Approximate tipping amounts can be found in our brochure and/or website. Exact tipping amounts will be stated in your final documentation, approx. 2 weeks before departure.

**Optional Extras** - A number of optional extra programmes/activities may be offered by your National Escort/Local Guide whilst on tour, time permitting. Please feel free to ask your National Escort/Local Guide about any optional touring they may be planning over the next few days and the approximate cost so you can ensure you have the appropriate funds. All the optional extras must be paid for in local currency. If you do not wish to take part in any optional extras, you will have the option of enjoying some free time at leisure or to return to the hotel.

**Personal Expenses** - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of £150 per week should be sufficient; however for those that can’t resist a bargain consider allocating a higher amount.

**Climbing steps** - Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves the climbing of stairs. These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steep steps to slow down the advance of the enemy once they were inside. The stairs tend to be large, uneven and sometimes without handrails.

**Appropriate dress** – The locals dress conservatively and you should make every effort to do this too. According to their culture, wearing brief shorts or shirts, revealing shoulders and legs, or going without a shirt is offensive no matter if you are a man or woman, and no matter the weather. For men, full-length cotton trousers are preferable, while shorts that cover the knees are acceptable. For women, skirts or trousers that reach below the knee are ideal, worn with tops that cover the shoulders. Women will find a modesty shawl (such as a large shawl or sarong) is useful to carry in your daypack while sightseeing, so that you can cover up when required. Please refer to your Your Travel Guide’s ‘dress appropriately’ section for more information.

### **After Your Booking**

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form, help sheet, and an Indian travel guide. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approx. 2 weeks prior to departure, and will include a travel wallet, badge, lanyard, suggested packing list and a phrase book, along with your final itinerary and international etickets.

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