



Kerala and the Southern Highlights

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17 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:

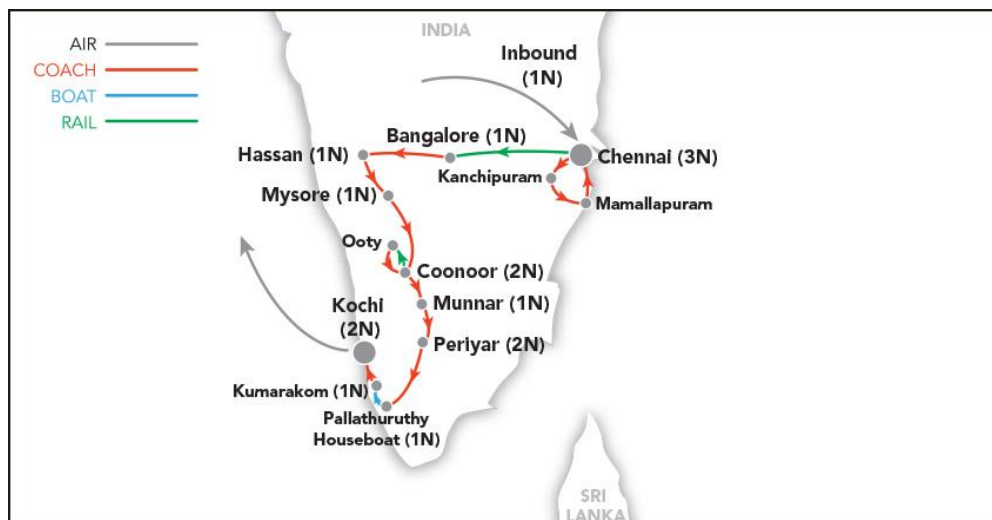
- International flights and current taxes
- Domestic transportation
- Accommodation
- All meals (excluding drinks)
- Touring with guides and entrance fees
- Visa fees for UK & EU passport holders

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.



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 recognize the demands of factors such as basic facilities and cultural differences they may encounter in some areas.

Kerala and the Southern Highlights - Medium Paced Tour

These tours are not strenuous however they do require a reasonable level of fitness. A typical Medium Paced Tour may include longer periods of sightseeing on foot and climbing of stairs. These tours may involve longer periods of driving; sometimes on poorly maintained roads; as well as some easy hiking.

This itinerary visits the highlands, old hill stations and a wildlife sanctuary located in the mountainous area called the Western Ghats. From Mysore to Kumarakom, you will spend 5 days at a moderate altitude; the highest being in Ooty at 2,240m. Refer to each day in the following pages below for altitudes reached each day.

These are considered to be moderate, rather than high altitudes and people rarely have any trouble with this. Your group will be driving up into the highlands and therefore ascending gradually in altitude, which is one of the best ways to minimise the effects of AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness). It is recommended to drink more (water, non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated drinks) and avoid exertion after arriving at a high altitude. However if you have an existing respiratory, vascular or coronary condition, we recommend checking with your doctor before undertaking this itinerary.

Mild symptoms of AMS occur in some people and include dizziness, fatigue, nausea or loss of appetite, breathlessness or headache. These usually develop over the first 36 hours at altitude and not immediately on arrival. AMS symptoms are experienced by people of varying ages and levels of fitness, and usually the symptoms will subside after a day or so. If symptoms worsen, you should seek medical advice and descend in altitude immediately.

Anyone with a reasonable 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. 30mins to your hotel and check-in.

Day 3: Chennai.

This morning a tour introduction will either be held in the hotel or on the coach. Food and drinks will not be served at this meeting. It is simply an opportunity for your group to meet and learn more about travelling in India. This morning you will meet at 10am to tour Chennai. Today's sightseeing involves approx. 4-5hrs on foot. Please note that parking is not allowed at Marina Beach so we will not be able to disembark here, just drive past it.

Day 4: Chennai to Kanchipuram and Mamallapuram

Drive 64km south to Kanchipuram for easy sightseeing and some shopping time. Then drive approx. 1.5hrs (66km) to Mamallapuram. Afterwards, visit the rock cut temples which involves approx. 2hrs on foot. Drive 1hr and 45mins (50km) back to Chennai.

Day 5: Chennai to Bangalore

This morning we have a very early rise (usually 4:30am) to catch the train to Bangalore (journey takes approx. 4.5hrs). 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 rooms are available. There will be easy sightseeing this afternoon.

Day 6: Bangalore to Hassan

This morning, you will change to a smaller coach. Check-out from the hotel and drive 3.5hrs (163km) to Sravanabelagola Jain pilgrimage centre – refer to **Appropriate Dress** section below. Sightseeing to see Bahubali Statue involves approx. 2.5hrs 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 1hr and 15mins (50km) to Hassan. After lunch, there is further easy sightseeing before checking in at your hotel.

Day 7: Hassan to Mysore

Mysore altitude – 770 to 850m [2500 to 3000feet]

Drive 3hrs (130km) to Mysore, viewing the Srirangapatnam Fort en route. At Mysore commence sightseeing of Mysore Palace/Chamudi Hill which involves approx. 3hrs on foot.

There is a temple and mosque inside the complex – refer to Appropriate Dress section. Visit the Nandi Bull statue on your way to the hotel, check-in overnight.

Day 8: Mysore to Coonoor

Coonoor altitude – 1850m [6070feet]

Drive approx. 5-6hrs to the beautiful hill station of Coonoor and check-in and relax.

Day 9: Coonoor - Ooty (Toy Train)

Ooty altitude - 2240m [7350feet]

Transfer a short distance to the station at 10:40am to board the 'toy train'. The journey to another Nilgiri Hill station – Ooty, takes 1hr and 20mins. Please note that the train timetable is subject to change – your Local Guide/National Escort will inform you of changes as they are made aware of them. There is leisurely sightseeing here including a visit to Sims Park, Ooty Botanical Gardens and the Ooty Lake and boat house. Perhaps some tour members may choose to walk further and uphill to a local village. This afternoon, return to Coonoor by coach.

Day 10: Coonoor to Munnar

Munnar altitude – 1524m [5000feet]

Drive approx. 9hrs (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. Continue to the hotel to check in.

Days 11-12: Munnar to Thekkady via Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary

Thekkady altitude – 1337m [4386feet]

Periyar altitude – 1700m [5600feet]

After easy sightseeing at Tata Tea Museum, drive 5hrs (130km) to Thekkady and the Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary. The following day, there is an early morning nature walk (departing at 0700) to view the wildlife. There is a variety of walks on offer, generally 4-7 km in length. Your local guide will provide you with leech protection socks to wear during nature walks. If you do not wish to join the walk, please notify your National Escort for alternative arrangements. Visit a local spice village and market in Thekkady before an evening Kalaripayattu performance.

Day 13: Thekkady to Pallathuruthy

Check-out from the hotel early this morning and drive 4 hours (160km) to the Pallathuruthy (Houseboat) which is the boarding point for Kerala backwater cruises, located near Kumarakom. Board the houseboats for sightseeing, followed by meals and overnight accommodation on board. Please note that while on the houseboats, electricity can be intermittent. There is a generator onboard, so keep this in

mind when charging phones, cameras or other electronic items.

Day 14: Houseboat to Kumarakom

Enjoy the breakfast on the boat and then disembark at Allepey. Drive approximately 1 hour to Kumarakom, stopping en route at a local market and coir factory. This afternoon is free at leisure.

Day 15: Kumarakom to Kochi

Drive approx. 1 ½ hours (80km) to Kochi. On arrival, check in the Cochin hotel. This afternoon, visit Kumbalangi Village.

Day 16: Kochi

Today, enjoy a full day tour around Kochi, including visits to St. Francis Church, Santa Cruz Basilica, Chinese fishing nets, Jewish Synagogue and local markets. Today's sightseeing

involves around 2-3 hours on foot and a total of 4-5 hours of sightseeing.

Day 17: Depart Kochi

Enjoy the day at leisure before it is time to transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Land Only

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 17, 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 - Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however 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: <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/>. Once completed you will need to print the completed form, and send it to our office along with your passport and 2 photos per person. The photos should be 2 x 2 in size 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. Your passport must be valid for 6 months from your date of return from India, and should have at least 2 blank pages for your Indian visa.

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 is a comprehensive website that you may also find useful.

Climate - Please refer to the travel guides on our website 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.

What to Expect on Tour

Group Size - All our group tours are guaranteed to run subject to a minimum number of 8 travelers 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 22 passengers.

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.

Book now on **0844 499 3899** visit www.wendywutours.co.uk or see your preferred travel agent.

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 kettuvallam houseboat.

Alcohol in accommodation – please note that some of the accommodation on this tour may implement a policy of not selling alcohol on the premise.

Development

Although India is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in the UK. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in the UK; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides. Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in India and Nepal and therefore the Indian and Nepalese people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers should use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving.

Traffic in India

Main and inner city roads in India have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in India have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road – not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections below are approximations only.

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.

Alternative Modes of Transport - You will take a ride on the **toy train** to travel between Ooty and Coonoor. In Munnar, the group bus is unable to pass under the bridge and so you will travel by **jeep** to and from the hotel, and while sightseeing. Refer to *Your Travel Guide* for further information.

The narrow roads of the highlands, especially those leading up to the hill stations or through the national parks can be difficult for the larger buses to negotiate. In Bangalore, you will therefore change to a smaller sized bus for the remainder of the tour. This will still have ample room underneath the vehicle and overhead racks to store your luggage.

Electricity - The supply of electricity is limited on board the kettuvallam houseboat. Power outages are more frequently experienced in Southern India, due to power shortages, and hotel generators may take a few minutes to start up. If you experience any difficulty please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Refer to *Your Travel Guide*’s ELECTRICITY section.

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 on our website. Exact tipping amounts will be stated in your final documentation, approx. 2-3 weeks before departure. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services.

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. Please note that **camera/video camera fees are not included** in the cost of the tour. 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 Book now on **0844 499 3899** visit **www.wendywutours.co.uk** or see your preferred travel agent.

tend to be large, uneven and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk a distance uphill from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb stairs once inside.

Altitude - This itinerary visits the highlands, old hill stations and a wildlife sanctuary located in the mountainous area called the Western Ghats. From Mysore to Kumarakom, you will spend 5 days at a moderate altitude; the highest being in Ooty at 2240m. Refer to the section below for altitudes reached each day.

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Appropriate Dress - When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in non-revealing clothes; full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques. When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout India – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – **require all visitors to remove their shoes when entering**. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove them, you will have to remain outside.

Bring some shoes that easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces.

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 with help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approx. 2-3 weeks prior to departure, and will include a travel wallet, badge, lanyard, feedback form, travel guide, along with your final itinerary and international e-tickets.

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