



Discover Kerala

Immerse Yourself | 13 Days | Active

Kochi - Muhamma - Alleppey - Thekkady - Munnar - Palakkad

India's most alluring state, Kerala's totally tropical landscapes range from golden beaches and mellow backwaters to jungle-clad hills and lush paddies. A long history of trade has made it a culturally rich and diverse, full of colourful ritual and exuberant arts – all of which you'll explore.

- Learn to cook like a local
- Cruise Kerala's backwaters
- Bamboo rafting in Periyar
- Explore tea and spice plantations
- Hike the Letchmi Hills
- Discover traditional fortune telling



Discover Kerala tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All Meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers)
- Visa fees for UK and EU passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL and IATA

The only things you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

Immerse Yourself:

Designed for those who wish to be further immersed in the authentic charm of Asia; our 'Immerse Yourself' tours include more cultural and active experiences. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts or Local Guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience. Our 'Immerse Yourself' tours include:

- Walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations

Active Tours:

'Discover Kerala' is an **active** tour. This is one of the most demanding trips Wendy Wu Tours offers. As a whole this itinerary requires a high level of fitness.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for extended periods of time including some hiking up hill
- Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps, often without handrails
- Between some of the places on this tour there will be long journeys by coach
- You will be required to get on and off varying sizes of boat or bamboo raft, often without assistance
- This tour features a mixture of hotels and traditional homestays. Please be aware that homestay accommodation will be more basic than some hotels but rest assure that all accommodation has been chosen to enhance your experience in Kerala

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of our Immerse Yourself Tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

Itinerary – Discover Kerala

Days 1-2: Arrive Kochi

Fly to Kochi. Your National Escort or Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours will meet you at the in the Arrivals Hall. Together with other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer approximately 1 and a half hours to your hotel and check-in.

Destination Information

Kochi - Also known as Cochin. Kochi is Kerala's most cosmopolitan city and its main trading centre for spices and seafood. Built around a saltwater lagoon of the Arabian Sea, Kochi is a collection of narrow islands and peninsulas.

Day 3: Kochi

This morning a tour introduction will either be held in the hotel or on the coach. Have a full day's sightseeing, visiting the Dutch Palace, the Jewish Synagogue, St Francis Church and the Santa Cruz Basilica. Also see first-hand the 'Chinese fishing nets' introduced by Chinese traders in the 14th century. Your tour ends in the Fort Kochi area where you can walk through the historical Dutch and Portuguese buildings. This evening, enjoy an Ayurvedic massage in your hotel. Today's sightseeing will involve about 2 to 3 hours on foot.



Destination Information

St. Francis Church - St. Francis Church is thought to be the first European church built in India, constructed by the Portuguese in 1503. The history of this church reflects the colonial struggle of European powers in India from the 15th to 20th centuries. It is said that the Portuguese trader, Vasco da Gama, was originally buried in St. Francis Church before being taken back to Portugal.

Santa Cruz Basilica - One of the eight basilicas in India. The Santa Cruz Basilica has an eventful history, which originates back to the arrival of the Portuguese in 1500.

Cantilevered Chinese fishing nets - A relic from the 14th century traders, the Chinese fishing nets are still in use today. Locally known as Cheenavala, they are used for a unique and unusual method of fishing and many fishermen earn a living by using these massive nets.

Jewish Synagogue - The prosperous Jewish trading community built the Jewish synagogue in 1568. It is the oldest synagogue in India but was partially destroyed in the war of 1662 and was rebuilt by the Dutch.

Day 4: Kochi – Muhamma

Today drive approximately 1 hour to your homestay hidden away in Muhamma, known as the Rice Bowl of Kerala. This evening you will learn about typical Kerala cuisine in a cooking demonstration and enjoy a home-cooked dinner.

Destination Information

Keralan Cuisine - Local dishes are made with traditional recipes passed down through generations; the hills of Kerala produce pepper, cloves, cardamom, nutmeg, cinnamon, all of which go into the flavors of this local food.

Day 5: Muhamma – Alleppey

Transfer 30 minutes to the jetty at Alleppey and board your kettuvallam, the local name for the houseboats that ply the backwaters. Sit back and relax as your boat cruises the beautiful jade water, meandering through canals, rivers and lakes, passing tiny villages, swaying palms, lush paddy fields and people going about their lives on the riverbanks. Dine on food cooked fresh onboard before retiring to your cabin for a night on the water.



Destination Information

Kerala Backwaters – A stretch of waters parallel to the coast of the Arabian Sea traditionally used for transportation; nowadays the backwaters attract tourists to a unique experience travelling along a mixture of manmade and natural canals, lakes and rivers.

Day 6: Alleppey – Thekkady

This morning, disembark your houseboat at the jetty and transfer around 5 hours to Thekkady by road. This evening, witness a Kathakali dance performance.

Destination Information

Thekkady – The Thekkady region has a large number of local tribes, with unique customs and beliefs each of which are distinctly different from the mainstream culture; it is also one of the most nature rich areas of Kerala.

Kathakali – A form of classical Indian dance, where performers communicate a story and wear colourful makeup and elaborate costumes.

Day 7: Thekkady

Take to the water this morning on a bamboo raft on the lake at the heart of Periyar Tiger Reserve. From the water, you'll get beautiful views of the forested hills and may spot some wildlife, such as elephants, gaur and sambar on the banks of the lake. The rest of your day will be at leisure for you to relax or explore the local spice markets.



Destination Information

Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary - Periyar is South India's most popular wildlife sanctuary, encompassing an area of 777sq km and set on the attractive man-made Periyar Lake. Declared a Tiger Reserve in 1978, the sanctuary is a rare example of human interference having enhanced rather than damaged an ecosystem. Though the sanctuary was made a part of Project Tiger in 1973, it is better known for its elephants.

Day 8: Thekkady – Munnar

Journey 4 hours by road into the Western Ghats to the hill station of Munnar, stopping en route at spice plantations and organic spice gardens to see what they grow, how it's grown and how it is used in day to day life. Later, visit a tea plantation and museum where you can get involved in the processes of running the plantation, such as plucking and planting, and learn about the history of tea in the area.

Destination Information

Munnar - A hillstation with vast expanses of tea plantations, sitting at an altitude of 1,524m. Once a favored summer resort for the British, Munnar features beautiful lush green hills and extensive tea estates.

Day 9: Munnar

Travel just out of town to the Letchmi hills, where your hike will begin. Strike out into tea plantations, climbing a hill to follow a beautiful ridge through grassland, passing more plantations and forest and absorbing spectacular views as you go. After a picnic lunch, wander through a Nature Zone, spotting exotic plants and birds that are endemic to the region. Return to Munnar where the rest of the day is at leisure. You will be walking today for approximately 3 to 4 hours, occasionally over steep and uneven ground.



Day 10: Munnar – Palakkad

Journey approximately 5 hours to the city of Palakkad. Visit Kandath Tharavad, a 200-year-old Kerala architectural gem built from mud and teak, before exploring the city itself. Kerala as a whole has long been a crossroads of trade and therefore diverse in culture and religion - this is reflected in the sights you will visit today – a Jain temple, the Shiva and Snake temple, Kalpathy Brahmin village and Hyder Ali's Fort.

Destination Information

Religion in Kerala - Kerala has ancient links with the major religions of the world. Christianity is believed to have come to Kerala's shores much before it reached Rome, via St. Thomas. Islam came early too, because of the Arab traders. Judaism sprung up when, according to legend, merchants came here as part of King Solomon's fleet, besides the vibrant Buddhist period and flourishing Jain communities. Despite so many religions, faith has always been a purely personal affair.

Day 11: Palakkad

Start the day with an invigorating yoga class before an easy walk through the rice paddies and enjoy a tumbler of tea in a local tea shop. Climb aboard a bullock-drawn cart to travel through winding country lanes to visit some of the area's cottage industries. Meet the artisans of a potter's and basket weaver's colony and see the technique of toddy tapping. This afternoon, prepare for something mystical! Learn about various methods of fortune telling that are popular in the Palakkad area, and have your own fortune read.



Destination Information

Astrology in Palakkad – There are 3 main types of astrology that you will learn about: "Kaviddi Astrology", the calculation and fortune predictions which are based on 27 sea shells empowered with divine positive energy. "Tambul Prasna" in which fortunes are predicted through the positioning, shape, marks and cuts of betel leaf which the devotee is carrying, and "Thatha Shastra" which uses cards to represent 'Karma'.

Day 12: Palakkad – Kochi

Travel from Palakkad back to Kochi, stopping en route at the old port town of Kodungalloor. Visits include the 52 AD Kottakavu Church, Cheraman Masjid, India's first mosque and Chenamangalam synagogue. Arrive in Kochi where there is an option to take a sunset cruise along the beautiful Malabar Coast (payable locally).

Destination Information

Kodungalloor - The town is considered the cradle of several world religions in India – Christians, Jews, Muslim and Hindus all settled here centuries ago, creating the perfect microcosm of Kerala's, and India's, diversity.

Day 13: Depart Kochi

You will be transferred to the airport according to the departure time of your flight today. Any time before your flight will be at leisure.

Discover Kerala Travel Information

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 following the instructions on the visa help sheet. Once completed you will need to email or post the appropriate documents to our office in order for us to process your visa with the embassy. Once your visa has been approved we will send you a copy of the completed visa by email for you to print out and take with you when you travel to India. Any passports and visa applications that require an express service will incur an extra 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.

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. These details will be available to your National Escort should they be required. 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.

Eating in India

Indian cuisine is one of the most influential, diverse and flavorsome culinary styles in the world. Indian dishes incorporate many spices and seasoning to create an explosion of flavors. Though Indian cuisine can vary greatly from the Indian food we get in the UK, it is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our classic group tours, from dinner on the arrival day until breakfast on the day of departure. Please be aware that dishes selected for your meals reflect the cooking styles and signature dishes of the local area you are in.

Dishes served in restaurants on our group tours are varied. Some will be vegetable-based with meat mixed in, and a few will be meat-based. Our restaurants are well aware of the western palate – there are plenty of non-spiced options. When eating meals on group tours, you will usually be seated around a large table with other tour members. Dishes will be served in the traditional ‘family style’; meaning that various dishes will be laid out in the centre of the table. These dishes are intended to be shared amongst the group – there is always more than enough to feed everybody.

Please read your travel guide, which you will receive with your final documents for more information about eating in India. We recommend that when it comes to Indian food, you stay open minded and try to be adventurous!

Accommodation

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family-run guesthouse in a smaller town or a heritage-type hotel. In remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and India. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards are met.

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and a 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 or Local Guide.

On this tour, you will stay on a houseboat, or 'Kettuvallam', which has all the comforts of a good hotel including furnished bedrooms, modern toilets, cozy living rooms, a kitchen and even a balcony for angling. Parts of the curved roof of wood or plaited palm open out to provide shade and allow uninterrupted views. Please note: While on the houseboats, electricity can be intermittent. There is a generator on board, so keep this in mind when charging phones, cameras or other electronic items. The cabins on board are all air conditioned, but the living areas and deck may be cooled with fans. If you are a light sleeper you may wish to bring ear plugs, as the generators may be loud at night.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. 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 above are approximations only.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

Development in India

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 you National Escort or Local Guides.

Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions, which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We



understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 18 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with Local Guides.

Tipping Policy

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and India is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed amongst your main service providers (for example local guides and drivers) throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort. 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.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Appropriate Dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and trousers 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 to enter. 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 your shoes, you will have to remain outside.



We recommend 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.

Climate

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

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 (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

Itinerary changes

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances, we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

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