

Incredible South India

Duration:: 15 Nights / 17 Days



Day 01: Arrive Chennai

Arrive by International flight, after traditional Indian style 'Swagat' (Welcome) by Exceptional Escapes representative, he would assist you at the airport & transfer to hotel for check in.

Chennai (formerly known as Madras), is known for its cultural heritage & temple architecture. The region was served as an important administrative, military, & economic centre dating back to the 1st century. The first Westerners were Portuguese, who arrived in the year 1522 & built a port. It then passed on to the Dutch in 1612. In 1639 the British East India Company established a fort & trading post & since then this coastal centre of trade has drawn traffic from all over the world.

Rest of the time is free for impendent activity.

Overnight Hotel – Chennai

Day 02: Chennai – Mahabalipuram (70 km - 02 Hrs)

Post breakfast guided sightseeing of Chennai, visiting: **Fort St. George**, built in the year 1640 AD by the British East India Company, under the direct supervision of Francis Day & Andrew Cogan. This bastion achieved



its name from St. George. Within the fort we visit **St. Mary's Church**, built in the year 1680 & oldest Protestant Church in the East contains several antiquities, not the least being the oldest British tombstones in India. **Fort Museum**, with 10 rooms displaying the old uniforms, coins, padlocks, old prints & palanquins. **Santhome Cathedral** derives its name from St. Thomas, the apostle of Christ who is believed to have visited *Madras* sometime during 52 AD. He was killed on St. Thomas Mount just in 78 AD & was interned in Santhome beach, where church was built. Several years later, another church was built & his mortal remains were transferred to the new one. **Museums**, established in 1857, it is undoubtedly one of the country's finest museums. It has sections devoted to geology, archaeology, anthropology, botany, zoology, sculpture & numismatics. Its most prized possessions are the relics from 2nd century AD Buddhist site of Amaravathi & the prehistoric antiques of South India.

Later we drive to **Mahabalipuram**, 7th century port city of the South Indian. It is believed to have been named after the Pallava king Mamalla. It has various historic monuments built largely between the 7th & the 9th century, & has been classified as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. The monuments are mostly rock-cut & monolithic, constitute the early stages of Dravidian architecture wherein Buddhist elements of design are prominently visible.



Rest of the time is FREE for relax.

Overnight Hotel – Chennai (B)

Day 03: Mahabalipuram – Excursion to Kanchipuram (65 km - 1½ Hrs)

Post breakfast guided tour of **Mahabalipuram**, visiting **Shore Temple**, one of the oldest temples in South India. It belongs to the 8th Century A.D. & is a good example of the first phase of the structure of temples constructed in the Dravidian style. Designed to catch the first rays of the rising sun & to illuminate the waters after dark, the temple ended up with an unusual layout.



Arjuna's Penance, world's largest bas-relief. This huge whale-back shaped rock contains figures of gods, demigods, men, beasts, & birds & in fact, can be said to represent creation itself. Next we visit **Rathas**, monolithic temples fashioned as chariots. They remain an architectural mystery, for each is apparently a faithful reproduction of a structure built of wood. In fact, even the grain of the timber beams & rafters has been simulated in stone. Of the eight Rathas, five have been named for the Pandava brothers, the heroes of the epic Mahabharata.

Later we take a day excursion to **Kanchipuram**, is one of the seven holy cities in the country. It was a city of learning for both Tamil & Sanskrit, & was believed to be visited by Hsuan Tsang. In ancient times it was called Kachi. Once had over a thousand temples & today there are more than a hundred extant. It is also known for its temples & silk sarees. We visit **Kailasanatha Temple**, built in 8th Century AD. It is built in the typical Pallava style, with a pyramidal tower, a pillared hall & vestibule, enclosed by a wall. The temple is famous for exquisite carvings & attracts devotees & tourists alike. There are 58 small shrines situated around the main shrine, as a compound wall. Fresco style paintings adorn the inner walls of the temple. Next we visit **Ekambaranatha**, ancient temple is dedicated to lord Shiva. The 57 metres high Raj Gopuram is one of the tallest towers in South India. The 3000 year old mango tree inside the temple has 4 branches each yielding different variety of mangoes.



Before returning to Mahabalipuram we visit **Kamakshi Amman Temple**, built in 12th century AD, as an important Shakthisthalam, known as Parabrahmaroonpini. The main deity is seated on Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Eswara &

Sadasiva.

Rest of the day is at leisure.

Overnight Hotel – Mahabalipuram (B)

Day 04: Mahabalipuram - Tanjore (300 km - 06 Hrs)

Post breakfast drive to Tanjore, flourished during the rule of the Nayaks & Mahrattas. It has been the treasure house of art for centuries. It is called the **Rice Bowl of Tamil Nadu**. Thanjavur is well-known throughout the world for its exquisite handicrafts like the Art Plate, pithwork, bronze icons, Thanjavur paintings & the classical South Indian musical instruments.

Later we visit **Brihadeshwara temple**, also known as Big Temple, built by Rajaraja Chola I was completed around 1010 CE. This 10th century CE temple, one of **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**, is a brilliant example of the Dravidian style of temple architecture. The beautiful Chola Fresco paintings on the inner walls of the temple are no way less than Ajanta paintings.



Overnight Hotel – Tanjore (B)

Day 05: Tanjore - Madurai via Trichy (200 Kms - 04 Hrs)

Post breakfast drive to **Madurai**, rich cultural heritage passed for more than 2500 years old & has been an important commercial centre as early as 550 AD. It is the oldest city in Tamil Nadu & was originally known as **Kadambavanam** or the **forest of Kadamba**.

En route visiting Trichy;

En route we stop at **Trichy**, which has very historic temples, monuments & churches. It was an important town in the days of the later Cholas, Nayaks as well as during the early days of the British East India Company. We start with **Srirangam Temple**, surrounded by the waters of the River Kaveri on one side & its tributary Kollidam on the other is a 600-acre island-town enclosed within the seven walls of the gigantic **Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple**. There are not less than 21 Gopuram here in this temple, one of which is the tallest in South India.



Later we visit **Rock fort** most famed landmark is an 83 m high rock which is the only outcrop in the otherwise flat land of the city. The most amazing fact about the rock is that it is one of the oldest in the world approximately 3,800 million years, which makes it as old as the rocks of Greenland & older than the Himalayas.

Evening is FREE.

Overnight Hotel – Madurai (B)



Day 06: Madurai

Post breakfast visit to **Meenakshi Sundareshwar** was first built 2000 years ago & was substantially expanded between the years (1623-55 AD). Initially there was only the Shiva temple. A striking feature of the temple is the astonishing structure known as *Ayiramkaal mandapam* or the Hall of a thousand pillars in the outermost corridor.

Overnight Hotel – Madurai (B)

Day 07: Madurai - Periyar (136 km - 3 ½ hr)

Post breakfast drive to **Periyar**, Set on an attractive lakeside, it is South India's most popular Wildlife Sanctuary. Periyar is a place to cruise on the lake & gives an opportunity to see wildlife. It is home to tigers, leopards, elephants, bison, antelopes, sambhar, wild boar, monkey, a wide variety of birds.

Later explore the sanctuary to experience the beauty & ecological pattern, followed by visit to the spice garden where you can see how spices like pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, vanilla, and nutmeg are grown.

Later enjoy sunset boat ride to view enchanting wildlife in the sanctuary on Lake Periyar (Approx 02 hrs)

Overnight Hotel – Periyar (B)

Day 08: Periyar – Kumarakom (135 km - 04 hr)

Start your day with an elephant ride (subject to availability) which is the best and safest way to explore the remotest and densest areas of the forests. If you are more keen in combing denser areas of the forests and search for some fierce creatures. Riding an elephant takes you back to the royal era, when only the Kings use to ride on these majestic creatures.

Post breakfast drive to Kumarakom, upon arrival transfer to hotel. **Kumarakom**; known for backwaters, huge Vembanad Lake & famous Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary.

Rest of the day is at leisure.

Overnight Hotel – Kumarakom (B)

Day 09: Kumarakom – Alleppey Ac Premium Houseboat)

Post breakfast proceed to visit **Kumarakom Bird sanctuary**. There are two seasons for birds: between October & February there are cormorants, teals, & other ducks & from February to July there are darters (snake birds), night herons, egrets, & Siberian storks. It also has golden backed woodpecker, crow pheasant, white-breasted water hen, tree pie etc.

Later transfer to **Alleppey, Alappuzha**, also known as **Alleppey**, is



a town in Kerala. A town with picturesque canals, backwaters & lagoons, it was described as the Venice of the East. It has a wonderful past, it owes its existence to the sagacious Diwan Raja Kesavadas in the second half of 18th century. Kuttanad, the rice bowl of Kerala with the unending stretch of paddy fields, small streams & canals with lush green coconut palms, was well known even from the early periods of the Sangam age. History says Alappuzha had trade relations with ancient Greece & Rome in BC & in the middle Ages. Alleppey now is the hub for backwaters tourism in Kerala.

On arrival we board the houseboat, locally called Kettuvallam, cruise around backwaters of Kumarakom – Alleppey to observe & experience the daily life of the villagers along the backwaters.



Overnight Houseboat (B, L, D)

Day 10: Alleppey - Cochin (53 km - 01 hr)

Post breakfast disembark the boat at Alleppey and drive to **Cochin**, a very popular & historical sea trade connection with Middle East, Mediterranean Europe, Dutch & British. It has one of the finest natural harbours on the Arabian coastline. Its cosmopolitan character is reflected in the buildings & structures representing different regions of the world.

Post lunch Guided sightseeing of Cochin;

Visiting **Jew Town, synagogue**, built in the year 1568, is magnificently decorated by Chinese tiles & Belgian chandeliers. Giant scrolls of the Old Testament can be found here. Also visit the **spice market**, where the air is filled with the pungent smell of spices & history that brought the world to its doorstep. **Chinese fishing nets, (Cheenavala)** are distinctly unique to Cochin. It is believed that traders from the court of the Chinese ruler Kublai Khan introduced these nets here.



Evening, we take you to view a Kathakali dance performance (time for photography of a lifetime) Enjoy and observe the elaborate pre dance make up ritual.

Overnight Hotel – Cochin (B)

Day 11: Cochin – Ooty (290 Kms – 6-7 Hrs Approx)

Post breakfast drive to Ooty (**Udagamandalam**), Queen of hill stations & the capital of Nilgiri district. It is one of the most popular tourist resorts in India. Nilgiri means Blue Mountains. It is a land of picturesque picnic spots. It was a very popular summer & weekend getaway for the Britishers during the colonial days. An added attraction for the tourists is the mountain train journey on a ratchet & pinion track which commences from Kallar, near Mettupalayam & wends its way through many hair-raising curves & fearful tunnels & chugs along beside deep ravines full of verdant vegetation, gurgling streams & tea gardens.

Rest of the day is at leisure.

Overnight hotel – Ooty (B)



Day 12: Ooty

Post breakfast enjoy Toy train ride Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR) is a treasured element and fabled charm of Nilgiris since 1899. This Nilgiri rail system is unique as it is the steepest one in Asia. The Nilgiri Mountain Toy train continues to inspire weaving through forests, moving through time, along the valleys and into the little dark winding tunnels, round the bends, up the gradients, through the glens, trees and birds. A whiff of mist, a myna's trill, sunlight dances on yonder hill, whistling, chugging, fire, steam-clacking, moving into a dream Gorge, gorgeous, misty, foggy shrouded peaks, drizzles clothe the slopes.



Later proceed for half day sightseeing visiting **Botanical Garden**, **Fernhill Place** -an erstwhile summer palace of Maharaja of Mysore, **St. Stephen Church** is a small gothic style architecture & first colonial structure founded in 1820. You will also have free time buy Neelgri Teas at **Charring Cross – a commercial street of Ooty**.

Rest of the day is at leisure.

Overnight hotel – Ooty (B)

Day 13: Ooty – Mysore (150 kms – 03 Hrs)

Post breakfast drive to **Mysore**, capital city of the Wodeyars kingdom. It has always enchanted its admirers with its quaint charm, rich heritage, magnificent palaces, beautifully laid-out gardens, imposing buildings, broad avenues & sacred temples. There's an old world charm about the city that reaches out to everyone. En-route we visit the **Srirangapatnam**, the historic capital of Tipu Sultan known for his struggle against British rule. Several monuments relating to his rule are sprinkled across the island.



Later we visit **Darya Daulat**, commonly known as **Summer Palace** of Tipu Sultan is situated amidst scenic surroundings on an island formed by two branches of the River Cauvery.

Rest of the day is at leisure.

Overnight Hotel – Mysore (B)

Day 14: Mysore

Post breakfast full day guided city tour of Mysore visiting Mysore, We also visit **Maharaja Palace**, designed by British architect Henry Irwin, the Amba Villas Palace as it is also known, was completed in 1912. **Chamundi Hill**, which is topped with a 12th century temple of Durga with the magnificent 5m tall Nandi, Carved from single piece of granite in 1659, its one of largest in India.

In the evening we visit **Brindavan Gardens**, dancing musical fountains on the terraces of Krishnarajasagar Dam, is a vast stretch of the most delicately planned symphony in architecture, horticulture, engineering & aesthetics.

In the evening we will take you to visit Mysore palace illumination (Highly recommended):



To see the Mysore palace illumination no ticket is to be bought. Arrive a little early to settle at a vantage position. The charm is to be there when the palace is lit in one stroke; rather than arriving after the illumination is already on. For both daytime visiting and illumination, entry is through the southern gateway. Also note that during the Mysore Dussehra festive days, the illumination is done on all the days, for extended hours.

IMPORTANT: Please note that the lighting would be cancelled if the state declared mourning on account of events such as demise of important personalities

In the evening experience the Lighting of the Palace. Mysore Palace Lighting timings: Sundays & Public Holidays: 19 PM - 19:45 pm

Overnight Hotel – Mysore (B)

Day 15: Mysore – Bangalore (145 Kms – 3 Hrs Approx)

Post breakfast drive to Bangalore, upon arrival transfer to hotel.

Bangalore, the garden city. The spacious city has many imposing structures full of historic & modern architecture. The majestic Vidhana Soudha, a magnificent post-independence structure housing the State legislature & Secretariat, stands in the center of the city with its attractive dome & galleries

Later proceed for half day guided tour of Bangalore:

Visiting **Tipu Sultan Palace**; the layout of the palace gives the idea of the ethnic Mughal lifestyle. The fort & its remains present the history of the era in which it was built. The construction of the Tipu palace was started by Haider Ali & completed by Tipu Sultan, it is now a museum. Also visit **ISKCON Temple**, harmonious blend of the Dravidian & modern architecture. The building has some of the modern facilities along with Vedic preaching library.



Next we visit the **Lal Bagh Garden**, name Lal Bagh has been given to it for the wonderfully bloomed red roses that remain blooming all through the year. Haider Ali started building this garden in 1760.

Rest of the day is at leisure.

Overnight Hotel – Bangalore (B)

Day 16: Bangalore Departure

Transfer to airport to board your international flight for onward journey taking back an Exceptional experience of India Holiday.

A partir de 1759,00 Euros

Destination Covered:: Chennai – Mahabalipuram – Kanchipuram – Mahabalipuram – Thanjavur - Trichy – Madurai – Periyar – Alleppey – Kumarakom – Periyar – Cochin – Ooty – Mysore – Bangalore Departure

Highlights & Inclusions::

1. *Tried and Tested stylish hotel accommodation for 15 Nights.*
2. *Complimentary Breakfast at all the hotels.*
3. *All meals at Houseboat.*
4. *Welcome soft drink on arrival at the hotel.*
5. *All airport transfers by private vehicle with friendly chauffeur.*
6. *Morning boat safari at Periyar Lake.*
7. *Elephant ride in Periyar.*
8. *Spice plantation tour in Periyar.*
9. *Kathakali dance in Cochin.*
10. *Toy train in Ooty.*
11. *IGST (Integrated Goods & Service Tax).*
12. *A 24x7 customer care representative at your disposal throughout your stay in India.*

Package does not include:: Any Monument entry fee & camera fee, Any International or Domestic airfare, Any optional service, Any expense of personal nature such as hard/soft drinks, laundry, one/fax calls, tips etc, Any other expense not mentioned in the “Package includes”.

Hotels to be used:-

Places	Deluxe Hotels / 5*	Standard Hotel / 4*
Chennai	Rdaisson Blu	Fortune Select
Mahabalipuram	Radisson Blu Temple Bay	MGM Beach Resort
Tanjore	Hotel Sangam	Ideal River View
Madurai	Haritage Madurai	Fortune Pandiyan
Periyar	Elephant Court	Cardamom County
Kumarakom	Zuri Kumarakom	Kerala Palace
Allepepy	Luxury Houseboat	Premium Houseboat
Cochin	Radisson Blu	Hotel Renai
Ooty	Taj Savoy	Fortune Sulivan Court
Mysore	Radisson Blu	Fortuen JP Palace
Bangalore	LaLit Ashok	Lemon Tree

Above or similar hotels to be used

Please note that Check in & checkout time is 1200 noon