

SOUTH INDIA
Magical Kerala
10 DAYS / 9 NIGHTS

Cochin • Devalokam • Munnar • Thekkady • Alleppey • Cochin



South India is a region of vast cultural wealth and lush beauty. It is an amalgam of exotic flora and fauna, spices, miles of ocean, sand and backwaters. On this journey, you will travel to Kerala, affectionately called “God’s own country” for its stunning natural beauty. A land of beaches and backwaters, lush tea plantations and spices, it enjoys a cultural heritage that can trace its influences back to Chinese, Arab and European traders.

The journey begins in historic Cochin, “The Queen of the Arabian Sea”, where you’ll have a chance to enjoy its rich mix of colonial and Indian traditions including Kathakali dancing and Keralan cuisine, before continuing into the Western Ghats to the hill resort of Munnar. Set against the backdrop of lush tea plantations, you will then explore the game rich landscapes of Eravikulam and Periyar by bamboo raft and on foot. During your journey, stay on a farm with a local family for a genuine taste of traditional life in the Keralan backwaters. The farm practices sustainable organic methods of farming and has coconut, nutmeg, banana, coca and pepper cultivation on site. End the journey spending a night on an exquisite Keralan houseboat.

ITINERARY

DAY 01: ARRIVE COCHIN

Namaste!

You arrive today at Cochin International Airport. Once you are done with customs, immigration, and baggage collection you will meet our representative and transfer to your hotel.

DAY 02: COCHIN (B)

Today get acquainted with the city's history and heritage which is a wonderful mix of Dutch, Portuguese, Arab, British and Jewish influences. Begin the morning with a **walk** through the bustling harbour area and quaint backstreets to discover its rich and multifaceted past. Then visit some of Cochin's most iconic historic sites. Of particular note is the **synagogue** in Jewish town. Built in 1568 (and rebuilt in 1664), its interior is an intriguing hodgepodge of styles, with hand painted blue and white floor tiles from Canton, China, 19th-century Belgian chandeliers and an elaborately carved ark housing four scrolls from the Torah. Overlooking the synagogue is **Mattancherry Palace**, home to the former Rajas of Cochin. It houses the Rajas' royal palanquins, weapons, robes and a collection of extraordinarily beautiful murals depicting ancient Hindu epics. Afterwards, visit **St. Francis Church**, originally built by the Portuguese in 1510 and believed to be the oldest church in India. Afternoon, enjoy some time to explore Cochin's eclectic market. Experience the city's markets and old quarters, most tourists never see. Your guide will be at hand to explain the life and activities around the market.

DAY 03: KOCHI – DEWALOKAM (B/L/D)

By surface (120 km/ +/-4 hrs)

Early morning at 0500, drive into rural Kerala to Dewalokam. Stop enroute at the temple town of **Kalady**. Arrive at the temple complex and start your day with Yoga. Witness Maha Ganapathi homam and visit Sri Krishna Temple and Advaita Ashram followed by a *simple vegetarian breakfast* in the temple. After breakfast, indulge in spiritual talk / interactive session conducted by the learned person. Later experience Pada Puja at Sringeri Temple and conclude the morning by a visit to the Shakaracharya Stupa.

Continue drive to Dewalokam and upon arrival, check in to the ancestral home of Alilakuzhy family for your stay. Dewalokam is a working farm, run on organic and eco principles, where you will not only be welcomed by the warmest of Keralan families, but help the local community and the planet. The homestay is Jose and Cinta's family farm where guests are welcomed with jasmine garlands and Keralan smiles. A stay at Dewalokam is a truly unique way to relax and unwind in the secluded and unspoiled heaven. Enjoy the home grown produce freshly cooked as you sample gourmet traditional Keralan food, and join the professional chefs in Dewalokam's state of the art kitchen in informal learn to cook sessions.

Settle into your room, and take some time to relax amidst nature.

Lunch is at the farm house. Afternoon, start guided walk to the plantation to see the organic plantation techniques, walking amidst the rows of vines creeping upwards on trellises. The correct time to pluck the peppercorns is when they are beginning to redden, just before they are completely ripe. Try your hand at it, but be sure to wash up before touching your eyes or nose! The scent of pepper mingles with the fresh mountain air. This is the starting point of the centuries old spice trade and that delicious flavour which makes such a difference to foods worldwide. *(Duration of the walk: approximately 2 hour)*

Evening, join the hotel chef who will share some of his techniques and traditions in the cookery class. Here you will learn the secrets of traditional mouth-watering Keralan delicacies. And of course, you will enter the magical world of Indian spices. What they are, how to use them, combine them, and savour the special magic they bring to even the most commonplace foods.

ACCOMMODATION: HOME STAY in DEWALOKAM for 2 nights

DAY 04: DEWALOKAM (B/L)

Early morning, practice yoga in the tranquil surroundings of garden.

Morning visit one of the oldest Ayurveda house in Kerala, Dhanwanthari Vaidyasala. Named after the god of Ayurveda – Lord Dhanwanthari, this hospital was established in 1933 and house its research and development centre and the manufacturing unit. During this visit, you will get the opportunity to see the facility and interact with the Ayurveda specialist to understand the use of essential oil for medicinal purpose.

Enjoy a traditional lunch at the estate.

Afternoon, is at your leisure and simply relax with meditation & pranayama session at the estate.

DAY 05: DEWALOKAM – MUNNAR (B)

By surface (150 km/+/- 04 hrs)

Today you head into the lush hills of the Western Ghats and the hill-town of Munnar. Strategically located at the confluence of three rivers, the town sits high amongst the cool highlands, surrounded by tea plantations and the mist shrouded hills of the Western Ghats. Look out for some wonderful waterfalls on your way up to the tea country. On arrival, check in for your stay.

Afternoon explore the surrounding tea plantations with an interesting trek to one of the plantations owned and managed by the Estate people. At the plantation, the guide will explain different types of tea, the plucking and manufacturing process and partake in tea tasting session. Enjoy the sunset and return back to the estate.

Note: this trek starts around 1530 hours and ends about 1730 hours.

DAY 06: MUNNAR (B)

Spend the morning trekking through the beautiful hills surrounding Munnar. Your trek will be for about 04 hours, and will end up at Top station, where you will get an opportunity to view the massive peaks spread throughout.

Optional Activity

Afternoon you have the option of exploring the Mattupetty dam and lake, Rajamala, the natural habitat of Nilgiri Tahr, a rare mountain goat and the Eravikulam National Park.

DAY 07: MUNNAR – THEKKADY (B)

By surface: (130 km/+/- 04 hrs)

This morning, drive for about 4 hours to Thekkady, with its eternal rainforest, spice plantations and canopies. On arrival, check in for your stay.

Afternoon, visit a **pepper plantation** to see the traditional plantation techniques, while walking amidst the rows of vines creeping upwards on trellises. The correct time to pluck the peppercorns is when they are beginning to redden, just before they are completely ripe. Try your hand at it, but be sure to wash up before touching your eyes or nose! The scent of pepper mingles with the fresh mountain air. This is the starting point of the centuries old spice trade and that delicious flavour which makes such a difference to foods worldwide.

Evening enjoy a night walk in the buffer zone of the Periyar Tiger Reserve, shining your flashlights to spot animals in the dark. This walk lasts for about 3 hrs.

DAY 08: THEKKADY (B)

After breakfast, spend the morning in Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary with your local guide trekking through the jungle and enjoying a bamboo rafting trip on Lake Periyar.

The Western Ghats – geologically older than the Himalayas – is one of the world’s most significantly bio diverse regions and has been given World Heritage Site status by UNESCO. The Forests of Kerala account for more than one-third of its terrain. Drive up to nearby Periyar National Park reserve, along the Cardamom and Pandalam hills of the Western Ghats and take a guided nature walk for about an hour on a trail through the park towards Periyar Lake. The ecosystem of the park is very interesting – the trees grow

up to 40m, and the dense canopy above only allows in limited sunlight. Along with the Malabar giant squirrel, hornbills, woodpeckers, and several other species of birds are easy to spot within the reserve.



At the bank of the lake, take a bamboo raft and cruise through the scenic Periyar Lake for about 2 hours through many delights of the sanctuary. From the elephant and tiger to the nilgiri tahr sambar, wild dog, leopard smooth-coated otters and lion-tailed macaque – around 35 species of animals live here.

Note: While walking deep in the forest, it is recommended to wear boots, socks, long trousers and full-sleeved shirts to avoid contact with leeches.

Remainder of the afternoon is at your leisure to explore on own.

DAY 09: THEKKADY – ALLEPPEY (B/L/D)

By surface: (140 km/+/- 04 hrs)

Today, drive to the backwaters of Alleppey with its drenched greens and coconut palms. On arrival, board **Kettuvallam**, a traditional houseboat and spend several hours drifting through the backwaters of Kerala enjoying meals onboard.

The backwaters are a network of canals, lakes, lagoons and estuaries stretching over almost 1000 square miles. Here, palm-fringed narrow canals wind through a vast expanse of paddy fields. As you float along, enjoy the picturesque hamlets that line the banks, migratory birds in abundance, water lilies and coconut groves.

Late evening the boat will anchor mid-stream, and your meals will be specially prepared by the crew from freshly bought produce.

OVERNIGHT ON A HOUSEBOAT

DAY 10: ALLEPPEY – COCHIN

By surface: (60 km/+/- 01 hr)

Post breakfast, disembark the houseboat and drive to Cochin airport to board your onward flight.

Hotel envisaged or similar:

City	Nights	Hotel	Room category
Cochin	02	Fragrant Nature	Duke Chamber
Dewalokam	02	Dewalokam Guest House	AC Standard
Munnar	02	Ambady Estate	Colonial Cottage
Thekkady	02	Cardamom County	AC Periyar Cottage
Alleppey	01	Deluxe House boat	Deluxe Room

Prices in CAD\$, per person, double occupancy, starting from	
Daily departures	Land package
January 11 – March 31, 2019	2699
April 01 – September 30, 2019	1999
October 01, 2019 – March 31, 2020 *	2599
Supplement(s) starting from:	
Single (minimum 2 passengers required)	1590

Cost Includes

- Accommodation of 09 nights on TWIN/ DOUBLE share basis at hotels mentioned above or similar.
- 15 meals: 09 breakfast, 03 lunches and 03 dinners
- Transportation by private air-conditioned vehicle as per the itinerary.
- Services of English speaking local guides during sightseeing tours
- Entrance fees to the places of visit as per the itinerary.
- Kathakali dance performance in Cochin
- Cooking demonstration followed by dinner with local family in Dewalokam
- Tea Plantations tour in Munnar
- Natures walk, in Periyar National Park.
- Packaged drinking water in the vehicle throughout
- All applicable taxes

Cost Does Not Include

- International Airfare and airport tax
- Visa fees for India
- Gratuities to hotel personnel, guides, drivers, etc.
- Any Insurance
- Any meals or options not mentioned in the itinerary

*Above rates are not valid during Christmas / New Year period (20 December - 10 January)