

## INDIA – MAGICAL KERALA 7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS



From the historic spice-trading centre of Cochin to the picturesque forestlands and rich wildlife of Periyar and miles of ocean, sand and backwaters, this journey is perfect for those looking to discover the best of this incredible region in a short amount of time. With a perfect blend of guided excursions and free time to explore on your own, this week long voyage is crafted for those who want to experience the highlights of Kerala; affectionately called “God’s own country” for its stunning natural beauty.

## ITINERARY

### DAY 1 COCHIN

Arrive in Cochin and transfer by our local representative to your hotel.

Kochi, or more familiarly Cochin is spread across islands and peninsulas in a stunning location between the Arabian Sea and the Backwaters. The city was founded in 1341 when a flood created a natural safe port, which became the principal harbor for Malabar Coast's spice trade. Cochin was on the main trade route between Europe and China. The Arabs, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, and the British have all left their mark here. The Jewish synagogue, the Dutch Palace, the Chinese fishing nets, and other remnants of European and Asian architecture merge smoothly into the traditional fabric of the seaport city.

### DAY 2 COCHIN

Explore the Fort Kochi area with its many small shops and market stalls interspersed with the Colonial architecture of this coastal city. On this guided walk, discover historic Kochi, with stops at St Francis Church - believed to be the oldest church in India, the Chinese fishing nets - a unique mechanical method of catching fish by local fishermen, and little markets along the way.

Next visit "Dutch Palace", built in the 1550's by the Portuguese and taken over by the Dutch, who later presented it to the Rajas of Cochin. The palace contains excellent mythological murals and a rare example of traditional Keralite flooring -- a subtle mix of burnt coconut shells, lime, plant juices and egg whites -- that gives the effect of polished marble.

Continue to Paradesi Synagogue, built in 1568 and considerably embellished in the mid-18th century by Ezekiel Rahabi who built a clock tower and paved the floor of the synagogue with hand-painted tiles brought from Canton in China.

In the evening, visit a local theatre to experience Kathakali. Literally meaning "story dance", it is the pantomimic dance drama, the dancing and the acting being blended together into an inseparable form. It is a combination of facial expressions and body movements, which brings out the thought and emotion of the character. **(B)**

### DAY 3 COCHIN – MUNNAR (130 km/6hrs)

Morning, 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.

Located in the Western Ghats at an altitude of 1,524 metres, Munnar is close to Anamudi, the highest peak in South India. The surrounding Nilgiri Hills are covered in a dense carpet of tea and a visit to the town's Tea Museum reveals how the plant was first introduced and cultivated in the area.

As a former colonial hill station, the British would retreat here from the heat of the plains in the summer months and the refreshing climate and stunning hill scenery continue to make it a popular escape. Rest of the day is at leisure for independent exploration. **(B)**



#### **DAY 4 MUNNAR**

Morning, 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 a tea tasting session. Enjoy the sunset and return back to the estate. Rest of the day is free for your own exploration; revel in the low-lying clouds and mists filled valleys, grab your camera and snap away as you admire the dramatic shades of setting sun over the rolling tea plantations. **(B)**

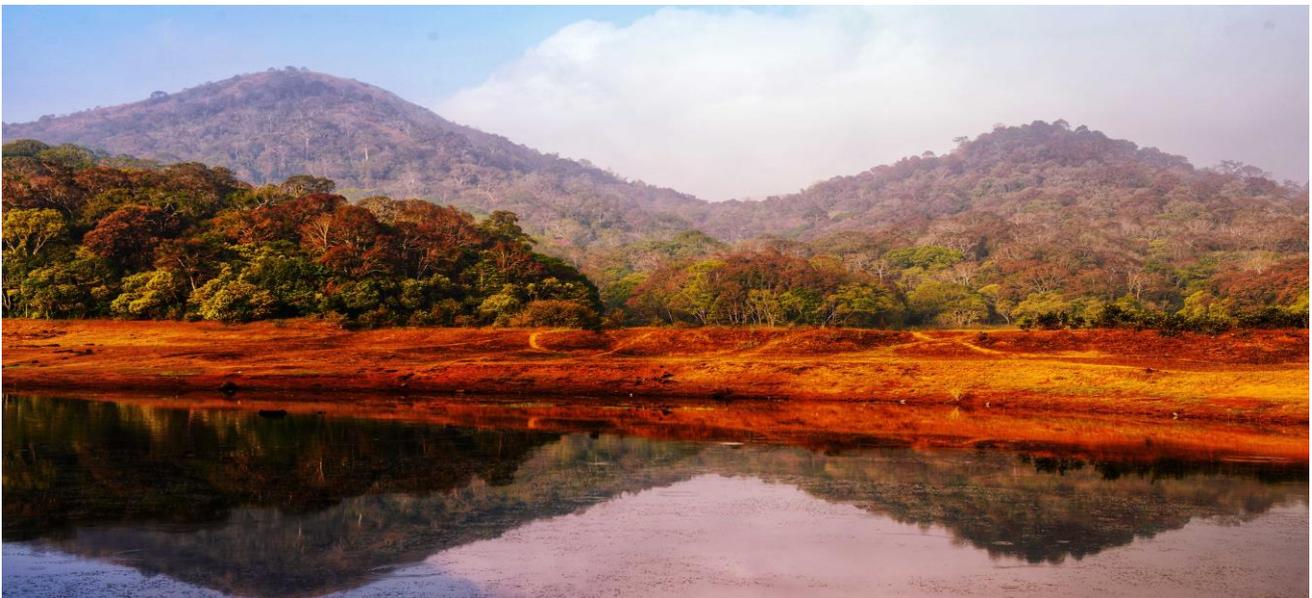
#### **DAY 5 MUNNAR – PERIYAR (95 km/3hr)**

This morning, drive to Thekkady, with its eternal rainforest, spice plantations and canopies.

On arrival, check in for your stay.

Thekkady is the 'Land of the Spices' Columbus was seeking when he stumbled on the New World; Kerala's Malabar Coast is famous for its fabulous spice crops. It is a spice trading town next to Periyar National Park in the Cardamom Hills and provides convenient access to the park. Early morning walks are recommended as the forest comes to life with the calls of birds and monkeys, while a day spent inside the reserve trekking, bamboo rafting or strolling through one of the spice plantations, a highly educational and enjoyable experience seeing how crops such as pepper and nutmeg are grown and harvested.

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. **(B)**



#### **DAY 6 PERIYAR – ALLEPEY (132 km)**

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. Later, drive downhill towards the backwaters of Alleppey. 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. **(B/L/D)**

#### **DAY 7 ALLEPEY-COCHIN (53 km)**

Your journey comes to an end! Check out from your hotel and transfer to the hotel.

### **INCLUSIONS**

- 7 night accommodation in double occupancy
- Return airport transfers
- Ground transportation in private air conditioned vehicle
- English speaking local guides (private guide)
- 8 meals: 6 breakfasts, 01 lunch and 01 dinner
- Services of English speaking local expert/ guide as per the program (*no guide during boat trip and nature walks. Done with park guides*)
- Sightseeing as per itinerary
- Entrance fees to sights – as per itinerary
- Bottled water in the vehicle throughout

**Not included** · International airfare and airport taxes · Gratuities to hotel personnel, guides and drivers · Beverages · Optional excursions · Visa for India \$. · Camera fees for certain sites

This is a privately guided tour with private car & driver. A local guide will be provided in each city. When driving to the next city, only the driver will be in the vehicle with the travelers.

Prices in CAD\$, per person, double occupancy, starting from	Land package	
	OPTION 1	OPTION 2
Daily departures		
October 1, 2019 – December 5, 2019	1199	1399
January 10, 2020 – September 30, 2020	1199	1399
Single traveler supplement	On request	

### Hotels or similar

CITY	OPTION I	OPTION II	NIGHTS
Cochin	Casino 4* (Superior Room)	Crowne Plaza 4+* (Deluxe City View Room)	02
Munnar	Blackberry Hills Retreat & Spa 3* (Nimbus Rooms)	Fragrant Nature 5* (Tropic Green)	02
Periyar	Tree Top 3* (AC Cottage)	The Elephant Court 4* (Patio Room)	01
Alleppey	Houseboat (not rated) (AC Boat)	Houseboat (not rated) (AC Boat)	01

Prices in this document are for information only; they were issued at press time, for the current year. Please note that due to exchange rates and temporary promotions, they can increase or decrease at any time. Contact your travel agent for the price and promotion of the moment.