

**CLASSIC SOUTH INDIA**  
12 DAYS / 11 NIGHTS



Tamil Nadu is a state in the south-eastern part of the Indian Peninsula. Tamilnadu carries along more than 4,000 years of continuous cultural history. This region has some of the most remarkable temple architecture in the country, and a living tradition of music, dance, folk arts and fine arts. Tamil Nadu is well renowned for its temple towns and heritage sites, hill stations, waterfalls, national parks, local cuisine and the natural environment and wildlife.

## ITINERARY

### DAY 1 CHENNAI

Arrive in Chennai. Meet and greet by our representative and transfer to your hotel. Rest of the day is free. The East India Company established its presence in southern India on the Bay of Bengal in 1639 with the establishment of Fort St. George. The city of Chennai, formerly known as Madras, grew up around the fort area. It now serves as the capital of Tamil Nadu and is the fourth largest city in India, with over six million inhabitants. It sprawls over a large area yet, in spite of recent industrial growth, seems less congested than other large Indian cities. Its role as a trade center is furthered by rail, road, and air connections in addition to its seaport. It presents both modern and traditional charm, its many British influences juxtaposed with Tamil-Hindu traditions.

### DAY 2 CHENNAI – MAHABALIPURAM (56 km)

This morning embark on a guided city tour of Chennai. Visit the museum with its bronze gallery for its superb collection of Chola art. Drive through the flower and fruit market, past the High Court, the Fort Museum with its collection of colonial memorabilia and Marina Beach. Visit the San Thome Cathedral said to house the remains of St Thomas the Apostle, Kapaleeshwara temple and the Snake Park. Later drive to Mahabalipuram. Upon arrival, check-in for your stay.

Mahabalipuram or Mamallapuram as it was called earlier was the port city of the Pallavas in the 7th century. In this picturesque setting, amidst sand beaches and the sea, can be seen some of the most important temple forms that influenced temple architecture in Tamil Nadu for centuries to follow. There are seventy monuments, rock-cut monoliths displaying fine sculpture. The most important group is the Five Rathas, named after the five heroes of the epic. On arrival, check in for your stay (check in time 1400 hour). (B)

### DAY 3 MAHABALIPURAM

This morning start your visit with the Shore Temple, which symbolises the heights of Pallava architecture and the maritime ambitions of the Pallava kings. Its small size belies its excellent proportion and the supreme quality of the carvings, many of which have been eroded into vaguely Impressionist embellishments.

Arunja's Penance is a relief carving on the face of a huge rock that depicts animals, deities and other semi divine creatures.

Also visit the Five Rathas. Carved from single pieces of rock, the Five Rathas are low-laying monoliths that huddle in more ancient subtlety than grandeur. Rest of the day is at leisure. (B)

### DAY 4 MAHABALIPURAM – PONDICHERRY (100 km)

After breakfast depart for Pondicherry, a former French colony that presents an unusual combination of European culture and Indian traditions. Its history can be traced back to Agastya, the revered sage of the south who built his hermitage here in 1500 BC. It became a part of India in 1954, but traces of its history as a French colony still remain in its churches, cuisine, grid-pattern streets and some colonial buildings. An added attraction is the town of Auroville, an oasis of peace and enlightenment.

Upon arrival, check in for your stay.

Afternoon visit Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The ashram was founded by the philosopher-saint Sri Aurobindo in 1926 to put into practice his ideals of a peaceful community. Its spiritual tenets represent a synthesis of yoga and modern science. It is also his final resting place. Also visit the Pondicherry museum, which has sculptures, archaeological finds, and memorabilia of the French colonists. See the Sacred Heart Church with its Gothic architecture and stained glass windows. Return to hotel. (B)

**DAY 5 PONDICHERRY – THANJAVUR (170 km)**

Check out from hotel and depart for Thanjavur with a stop on the way to visit Swamimalai Temple.

In Swamimalai, Lord Muruga is known as "Balamurugan" and "Swaminatha Swami". The speciality of the temple is that it has been built on an artificial hill. In Tamil language, such an artificial hill is called "Kattu Malai". The next important feature is the steps of this small artificial hill. There are 60 steps and each is named in one Tamil year. There are a total number of 60 Tamil years and hence the 60 steps. Another name for this place is "Thiruveragam". Later continue your drive to Thanjavur located on the eastern coast, and known as having been the capital of the Cholas, one of the greatest dynasties of the south. The city is also known for its bronzes, silks and the famous Tanjore paintings. Upon arrival, check in for your stay. (B)

**DAY 6 THANJAVUR**

After breakfast, visit the famous Brihadisvara Temple also known as the "Big Temple" built between 985 and 1012 AD and is a World Heritage monument. It is a magnificent structure with a 14 storey high vimana, a towered sanctuary that houses the main deity. A dome carved from an 80-ton single block of granite tops the vimana. An enormous Nandi bull, the traditional vehicle for Shiva guards the entrance to the main sanctuary. According to legend, the Nandi Bull grew every year until it was threatening to overwhelm the temple. Ultimately a nail was driven into its back to prevent its growth. Built mainly of granite, the temple has superb inscriptions and sculptures of Shiva. Afternoon is at leisure. (B)

**DAY 7 THANJAVUR - MADURAI (195 km)**

This morning after breakfast, leave for Madurai en-route visiting Trichy. Mentioned by Ptolemy in the 2nd century BC, Tiruchirapalli or Trichy as it is commonly referred to, was built mainly by the Nayaka kings who saw the advantage of its strategic position at the head of the delta of the Cauvery River. Its name is traced to a story about a demon Trisiras who terrorized man and gods until he was overpowered by Shiva at Tiruchi.

In Trichy visit the Rock Fort which stands on an 84m. Further up is a hundred pillar hall and at the end of the last flight is the Tayumanasvami Temple dedicated to Shiva, which has a golden vimana, which houses the main deity. There are also beautifully carved pillar and panels. Later continue your drive to Madurai and check in at the hotel.

Madurai is the oldest city in Tamil Nadu, probably dating back 2500 years. Its origin and name emerges from the myths of a wonderful legend. In a forest



near a lotus pond, Indra the King of the Gods worshipped Shiva. At this hallowed spot, the Pandiyan monarch built a great temple, and raised a lotus-shaped city around the temple. On the day the city was to be named, Lord Shiva appeared. As he blessed the land and its people, divine nectar was showered on the city from his matted locks. The city was henceforth named Madhurpuri, which grew and prospered and became the capital of the Pandiyan Kingdom.

Upon arrival, check in for your stay. Late evening attend the night ceremony at the Meenakshi temple taking place every evening when the temple bronze of Lord Shiva is carried to the bed chamber of Parvati. The procession is accompanied by religious prayer and temple music. (B)

**DAY 8 MADURAI – THEKKADY (140 km)**

After breakfast visit the Meenakshi temple dedicated to the consort of Lord Shiva. Also visit the elegant Thirumalai Nayaka Palace. Built in 1636 its 15 domes and arches are adorned with stucco work. In the afternoon you will be driven to Thekkady.

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. (B)

**DAY 9 THEKKADY – KUMARAKOM (115 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.



Also, visit a pepper plantation to see the traditional plantation techniques. The correct time to pluck the peppercorns is when they are beginning to redden, just before they are completely ripe. The scent of pepper mingles with the fresh mountain air. Later drive towards the lush backwaters of Kumarakom, Kerala's heartland of lagoons; palm fringed lakes and paddy fields, inter-linked with hundreds of winding canals. Not only do the backwaters of Kerala link the state together, they are an integral element in maintaining ecological balance and creating harmony with nature. (B)

**DAY 10 KUMARAKOM**

In the morning transfer to the boat jetty and board a Kettuvallam, a traditional houseboat, and spend several hours drifting through the backwaters of Kerala enjoying lunch onboard. The Kettuvallam or 'boat with knots'- was so called because the entire boat was held together with coir knots only - not even a single nail is used during the construction. The boat is made of planks of jack-wood joined together with coir and coated with a caustic black resin made from boiled cashew kernels. With careful maintenance it can last for generations. While most boats are poled by local oarsmen, some are powered by a 40 HP engine. The backwaters are a network of canals, lakes, lagoons and estuaries stretching over 1000 square miles. As you float along, enjoy the picturesque villages that line the banks, migratory birds, water lilies and coconut groves. (B/L)

**DAY 11 KUMARAKOM – COCHIN (65 km)**

Depart to Cochin. On arrival, check in for your stay. Afternoon start your exploration with Fort Cochin with a walk through the bustling harbor area and quaint backstreets to discover it's rich and multifaceted past. Kochi is full of echoes of Kerala's past colonizers, including Hindu and Mughal dynasties, Portuguese and Dutch conquerors, and the British Empire - which came seeking control of the lucrative pepper trade. The city hosts the oldest church in India, 500-year-old Portuguese houses, old tiled houses built in the Chinese pagoda style, and a Jewish community whose roots go back to the Diaspora.

Explore the Jewish town with fascinating antique shops and wares. Looming protectively over the synagogue is the Mattancherry palace, previously home to the Verma kings and today a fine museum. In the evening visit a local theatre to experience a Kathakali performance literally meaning "story dance". (B)

**DAY 12 KOCHI**

Your journey comes to an end. Transfer to the airport for your flights back home. (B)



### INCLUSIONS

- 11 night accommodation in double occupancy
- 12 meals: 11 Daily buffet breakfasts and 1 lunch during day cruise
- Transportation services using private air conditioned vehicle
- Services of English speaking local guides (private)
- Entrance fees to the places of visit as per the itinerary
- Bottle water in vehicles

**Not included:** International/domestic airfare. Any room service, telephone charges, mini bar, gratuities, tips. Any expenses of personal nature. Meals not specified in the itinerary. Visa for India \$

Minimum 2 passengers required to guarantee

Price in CA\$, per person, double occupancy, starting from:	4* Standard	4* Superior
<b>Daily departures 2021</b>		
January 10 – March 31	2399	2749
April 1 – September 30	2399	2549
October 1 – November 30	2399	2749
<b>Single room supplement</b>	On request	

### Hotels or Similar

CITY	4* Standard	4* Superior	Nights
<b>CHENNAI</b>	GRT Grand (Business Class)	Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park (Superior Room)	01
<b>MAHABALIPURAM</b>	Welcomhotel Kences Palm Beach (Club Room)	Intercontinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort (Resort Classic)	02
<b>PUDUDCHERRY</b>	Accord (Superior Room)	The Windflower Resort And Spa (Studio Garden View)	01
<b>THANJAVUR</b>	Ideal River View Resort (Garden Facing Room)	Ideal River View Resort (Garden Facing Room)	02
<b>MADURAI</b>	GRT Regency (Superior Room)	Heritage Madurai (Deluxe club room)	01
<b>THEKKADY</b>	Poetree Sarovar Portico (Club Room)	The Elephant Court (Patio Room)	01
<b>KUMARAKOM</b>	Backwater Ripples (Superior Garden View)	The Zuri Kumarakom Resort & Spa (Zuri Lagoon)	02
<b>COCHIN</b>	Radisson Blu (Superi room)	Crowne Plaza (Deluxe City View Room)	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.