



# The Colours and Culture of Southern India

15 days |  
17 November - 1 December

The southern states of India differ so much from the northern states that it feels like a totally different country.

## Highlights

- Santhome Cathedral in Chennai
- The evocative shore temple and rock carvings of Mahabalipuram
- The ghost of a French past in Pondicherry
- The colourful Meenakshi Hindu temple in Madurai
- Gentle hiking in Thekkady
- An overnight stay on rice barges on the backwaters of Kerala
- Train journeys on the regular services of India Railways
- Narrow gauge steam train to Ootacamund (Ooty)
- A performance of the famed Kathakali dance

**The landscape is greener; temples and architecture are unique and influenced by a history that has encompassed different faiths. The state of Kerala has a Christian history, and Cochin retains the flavour of its Jewish past.**

**South Indian cuisine can be hot, but is often tempered using coconut milk. Characterised by specialities such as the 'dosa', a lentil and rice pancake with a delicious vegetable stuffing, served with different sauces, South Indian eating is a very special experience. Coffee is common here replacing the ubiquitous 'chai' of North India.**

**Day 1 Sunday 17 November (D)** Arrive Chennai.

**Day 2 Monday 18 November (B,D)** This morning's sightseeing tour of Chennai will include the Santhome Cathedral. Originally built by the Portuguese in the 16th century, over the tomb of St Thomas, it was later rebuilt by the British in 1893 and given the status of a church. Other highlights include the Hindu Kapaleeshwarar Temple and Fort St George. This afternoon we take the short drive to the coastal town of Mahabalipuram.

**Day 3 Tuesday 19 November (B,D)** Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Mahabalipuram will reveal some of its architectural treasures today. Our sightseeing tour will include the evocative shore temple for which the town is famous. Built in 700-728 AD in the Dravidian architectural style, the temple has been washed by the waters of the Bengal Sea over centuries. We will see the bas-reliefs of 'Anjuna's Penance' and marvel at the skill of the stone workers who carved them.

**Day 4 Wednesday 20 November (B,D)** After a short drive this morning we reach the coastal town of Pondicherry. The town has enjoyed a complicated history of colonialisation but was finally transferred from France to India in August 1962. We will visit the atmospheric coastal French quarter with its heritage buildings and churches, cafes and restaurants.

**Day 5 Thursday 21 November (B,D)** This morning we drive to the railway station of Villupuram to board the train to Madurai, arriving late afternoon. An evening

visit to the colourful and intricately decorated Meenakshi Amman Temple around which the town is centred will provide an insight into a vibrant atmosphere of worship.

**Day 6 Friday 22 November (B,D)** We visit the 17th century Thirumalai Nayak Palace this morning with its blend of Dravidian and Islamic architecture. Our tour will include the Entrance Gate, The Main Hall and the Dance Hall. From the palace we continue by road to Thekkady on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border. As this area is famous for its spices the day will include a visit to a spice plantation.

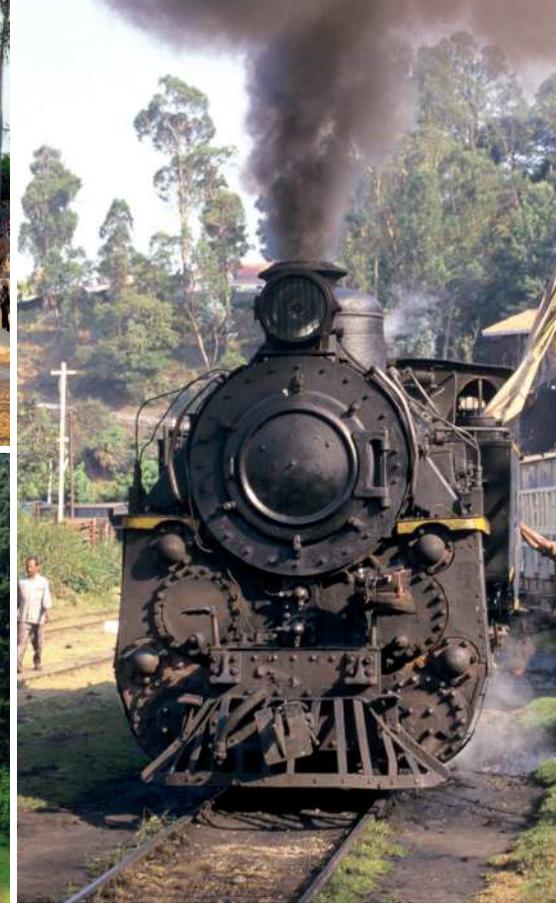
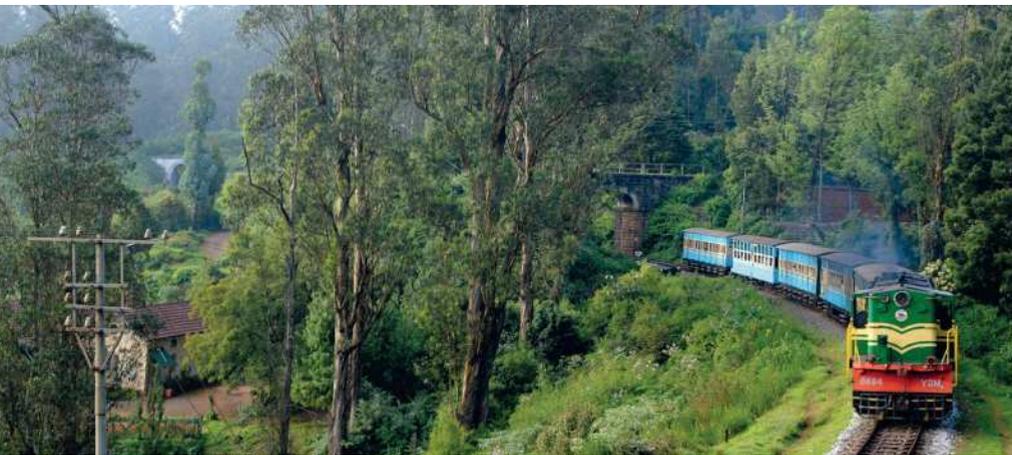
**Day 7 Saturday 23 November (B,D)** Thekkady is known for its wealth of wildlife and we have the opportunity today to take a gentle hike in the Kumbly Hills, or enjoy a day at leisure.

**Day 8 Sunday 24 November (B,L,D)** We drive to Alleppey this morning where we board our converted rice barge for a cruise and overnight stay on the tranquil backwaters of Kerala.

**Day 9 Monday 25 November (B,D)** After disembarking we take the short drive to Cochin, once known as Queen of the Arabian Sea. Our sightseeing tour will include the distinctive Chinese fishing nets. Atmospheric Cochin retains remnants of a once thriving Jewish community and we will visit the Old Dutch synagogue as well as the old town.

**Day 10 Tuesday 26 November (B,D)** We have some time at leisure this morning to explore the historic areas of Cochin. After lunch we take the train to the town of Coimbatore arriving in time for dinner.

**Day 11 Wednesday 27 November (packed breakfast,D)** A very early departure to Mettupalayam station where we board the 'toy train' narrow gauge railway to Ootacamund (Ooty) arriving around lunch time. Our luggage will be transported by road. Remainder of the day is at leisure to enjoy the lakes, colonial buildings and gentle strolls in this hill station in the Nilgiri mountains



**Day 12 Thursday 28 November (B,D)** The morning is free to further enjoy the tranquillity of Ooty before an afternoon departure by road to the town of Mysore

**Day 13 Friday 29 November (B,D)** We have a full day of sightseeing in the vibrant city of Mysore. This morning we visit the Devi Temple on Chamundi Hill and the 5m-high statue of Nandi (Shiva's bull), carved out of solid rock in 1659. In the afternoon we visit Mysore Palace. The original palace was burnt down in 1896 and the splendour we will see today has literally risen from the ashes. A blend of Hindu, Mughal, Rajput, and Gothic styles, the palace is truly spectacular, both inside and out.

**Day 14 Saturday 30 November (B,D)** This morning we drive to the Belur and Halebidu temples which will give us an insight into 16th century Hindu temple art at its glorious best, characterised by carvings and splendid architecture. After lunch in the town of Hassan we continue to the railway station for the late afternoon departure of our train, due to arrive in Bangalore by mid-evening where we will dine and spend our final night.

**Day 15 Sunday 1 December (B)** We depart Bangalore today for the airport and our flights back to the UK.

### Prices (per person)

- 15 day tour including flight from London: £2,450
- 15 day tour including flight from Birmingham, Manchester or Glasgow: £2,510
- Own travel to/from Delhi (15 days): £1,850

### Options

- Single room supplement: £490
- A flight supplement may apply for late bookings

### Deposit

- £1,000

### Flights

- BA0035 14.15 Heathrow to Chennai
- BA0118 07.00 Bangalore to Heathrow
- EM0040/544 13.30 Birmingham to Chennai via Dubai
- EM0565/37 10.25 Bangalore to Birmingham via Dubai
- EM0018/544 13.10 Manchester to Chennai via Dubai
- EM0565/19 10.25 Bangalore to Manchester via Dubai

## Special Offer

Do both India tours for a special discount