

# Classic South India



Days:	14
Price from:	1590 USD International flight not included
Comfort:	★★★★★
Difficult:	★★★★☆☆
📍 Culture	

## TOWERING TEMPLES, LUSTROUS, WATERY WORLDS

This tour introduces to us the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in its two-week itinerary that takes us across tropical south India with fabulous temples, holy Hindu shrines, princely palaces, wildlife reserves, green waterways and backwaters en route.

Setting out from Chennai, one of India's top four metros, we journey to the temple towns of Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram palace. The temples of Mahabalipuram, Madurai and French colonies of Pondicherry are just spectacular. We will also interact with locals by visits to popular local bazaars, typical traditional work places, and walks and visits to villages. This trip delivers you an immense opportunity to your taste buds with south India cuisines like Chettinad cuisine, different varieties of sea foods, Kuttanadan fish curry and chicken curry.

From here we travel down the west coast into serene and charming Kerala. The historic trading center of Kochi, with its heritage architecture, multi-religious ambience and rich cuisine, is our first port of call. After a day spent sightseeing in Kochi, we drive to Alleppey to begin an enchanting voyage; A cruise on the backwaters in a houseboat, also our quarters for the night

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 6th and 9th century Mahabalipuram temples carved from rocks
- Exquisite hand-woven silks and gorgeously carved temples of Kanchipuram
- The spectacular Meenakshi Temple of Madurai
- Walk through Periyar National Park
- Delightfully charming backwaters of Kumarakom

## Day 1. Traditional Welcome on arrival and rest of the day free



Chennai 📍

- Arrive at the Chennai **International airport** and transfer to the hotel for check-in.

🏠 Accommodation

Residency Tower

## Day 2. Way to town of world heritage listed temples



- After breakfast, we drive down to Kanchipuram, one of the seven holy cities in the country and famous all over India for its hand-woven silk sarees. We visit the Kailasanathar Temple famous for exquisite carvings with 58 small shrines situated around the main shrine. Next in our programme is **Kamakshi Amman Temple** housing the statue of Kamakshi who is said to be the Super-goddess, Parasakti, having Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati as her eyes. She blesses all who dedicate themselves to her. We later drive to Mahabalipuram and check into the hotel.

Chennai 📍  
🚗 75km - ⌚ 1h 40m  
Kanchipuram 📍  
🚗 70km - ⌚ 1h 40m  
Mahabalipuram 📍

🍽️ Breakfast

Residency Tower

🏠 Accommodation

Hotel Mamalla Heritage

## Day 3. Drive to Pondicherry after visiting temples of Mahabalipuram



Mahabalipuram 📍  
🚗 100km - ⌚ 3h 50m  
Pondicherry (Puducherry) 📍

- In the morning we visit five **rock-cut monolithic temples**, each created in its own style and providing an insight into the art of Dravidian Style of construction in temples. We also visit the 8th century Shore Temple built on the seashore of Bay of Bengal with blocks of granite, in Dravidian style. This village is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its countless sculptures and superb temples including the **Shore Temple**.

On our tour we will discover a huge bas-relief depicting Ganga descending on Earth- the skillfully carved rock of Arjuna's Penance - the largest bas-relief sculpture in the world, the **Rathas** (large carved stone carts) five monolithic temples, each created in different exquisite styles, and also the Shore Temple built on the seashore of Bay of Bengal with blocks of granite are also a feast to the eye. Built in Dravidian style the temple dates back to the 8th century CE. The monuments are mostly rock-cut and monolithic representative of the early stages of Dravidian architecture with Buddhist elements clearly visible. Evening is at leisure to enjoy beaches.

- Following the tour of **Mahabalipuram**, we proceed to Pondicherry, which retains a strong sense of the former French presence in India: grid pattern streets, distinctive police uniforms and the occasional colonial building around everywhere.

🍽️ Breakfast

Hotel Mamalla Heritage

🏠 Accommodation

Hotel Atithi

## Day 4. Discover Pondicherry



Pondicherry (Puducherry) 📍

- After breakfast, we embark on a sightseeing tour of the town to explore its Gallic heritage. Places of tourist interest include the **Shree Aurobindo Ashram**, Auroville, the **French Institute and Colony, Museum and Church**.

You will also get time to discover at your own pace the treasures of the city and the market Goubert that offers fabrics, vegetables, flowers, meat ... in its crowded alleys.

🍽️ Breakfast

Hotel Atithi

🏠 Accommodation

Hotel Atithi

## Day 5. Explore temples and architecture of temples of Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Darasuram



Pondicherry (Puducherry) 📍  
🚗 100km - ⌚ 2h 30m  
Gangaikonda Cholapuram 📍  
🚗 35km - ⌚ 50m  
Kumbakonam 📍  
🚗 40km - ⌚ 1h 20m

- After breakfast, we drive to **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** Shiva Temple and **Chidambaram Temple**. Later, we visit the famous Darasuram Temple in **Kumbakonam**, a superb example of 12th century Chola architecture. This temple is a house of art and architecture. The height of vimana is 85 feet. Temple also has some beautiful stone carvings.

Following our visit, drive to Thanjavur, one of India's most important religious centres, built in the 10th century and declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We arrive in **Thanjavur** and check into the hotel.

🍽️ Breakfast

Hotel Atithi

🍷 Dinner

Hotel Star Residency Thanjavur

🏠 Accommodation

Hotel Star Residency Thanjavur

## Day 6. Discover and admire the temples of Trichy and head to Chettinad



Thanjavur 📍  
 🚗 60km - ⌚ 1h 20m  
 Tiruchirappalli (Trichy) 📍  
 85km - ⌚ 1h 40m  
 Chettinad 📍

- After breakfast we proceed on a tour of **Brihadeeswarar Temple** and **Thanjavur Palace**.

Thanjavur Palace offers visitor grandeur and history. It has huge halls, courtyards, towers, corridors etc. The Palace consists of a library, art gallery and a museum. The latter displays many items of the kings who ruled the palace as the royal cloths, weapons, head gears and many more. The **Nayak hall** of the place has Art Gallery. This galley has a variety of collections of artifacts from Chola dynasty during 8th and 9th century. Then, **Saraswathi Mahal** library also contains an astonishing collection of manuscripts on palm leaves and paper. We cannot visit the library, but, these Palm leaves can be viewed in the museum.

Then, we see the beautiful **Chola temple of Brihadeeshwara** - dates from the 10th century CE. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is a brilliant example of Dravidian temple architecture.

- Following tour of Thanjavur, we drive to Trichy. Visit **Rock Fort Temple and Uchipillaiyar Koil**. Rockfort Temple, 83m high is 3.800 million years old Temple. This makes it as old as the rocks of Greenland and older than the Himalayas. At the top of the rock is the Uchipillaiyar Koil, a temple dedicated to Lord Vinayaka.. Trichy, built under the reign of the emperors Chola. Nearly twenty thousand people live and work inside the temple, which looks more like a small town where you will find shops and housing for Brahmins

Following a drive, we reach to Chettinad. Upon arrival, check-in at hotel.

🍽️ Breakfast	Hotel Star Residency Thanjavur
🏠 Accommodation	Chidambara Vilas

## Day 7. Visit to Chettinad to experience the Tamil culture and travel to Madurai



Chettinad 📍  
 🚗 90km - ⌚ 2h 10m  
 Madurai 📍

- After breakfast, we visit the **Chettinadu** area - the **Chettinad Museum** next to the palace to discover the making of the famous Athangudi tiles.
- Following the tour of Chettinad, we drive to Madurai. It is one of the oldest cities of south India and had originally been designed in a lotus motif. It is an extremely sacred city and here lies the renowned Meenakshi Temple. Upon arrival, check in at hotel

🍽️ Breakfast	Chidambara Vilas
🏠 Accommodation	JC Residency

## Day 8. Discover Madurai



Madurai 📍



- Today, proceed on a tour of Madurai. The most famous sight in Madurai is the Meenakshi Amman Temple - an outstanding example of Vijayanagar Temple architecture. Built during the **Nayaka period** between 16th and 18th centuries it is one of the largest temple-complexes in India. The gopurams that surround the temple are known for their colourful stucco images of Gods, Goddesses and animals. Later we visit the Thirumalai Nayak Mahal built in 1636 in Indo-Mughal style by the Nayaka Dynasty. The main temple is dedicated to Meenakshi, the 'fish-eyed Goddess' and consort of Shiva.

Madurai is a perfect place to wander around and to experience Hindu culture with the temples and bazaars in the heart of the vibrant city. The evening is free to explore.

🍽️ Breakfast	JC Residency
🏠 Accommodation	JC Residency

## Day 9. From Temples to the Jungle of South India



Madurai   
🚗 140km - ⌚ 4h  
Periyar (Thekkady) 

- In the morning, we drive to [Periyar(Thekkady)](periyar thekkady) and re-enter the state of Kerala. The drive is spectacular as the road climbs through the Western Ghats and commands fantastic views across Tamil Nadu. We arrive in the small bustling village of Thekkady and check into the hotel. This whole area is a center for spice cultivation.

After lunch, we take a short walk around a **spice garden** where we see many different spices growing. There is plenty of time in the afternoon to explore the bazaar where a large number of shops selling cardamoms, vanilla, peppercorns, chilies, turmeric and other spices flank the road.

☕ Breakfast	JC Residency
🏠 Accommodation	Abad Green Forest - Resort, Thekkady

## Day 10. Jungle walk in Periyar National Park



Periyar (Thekkady) 



- In the early morning, we take a **Jungle walk** in the park along with our forest guides to admire abundance of birdlife that includes kingfishers, storks and hornbills which are the most commonly spotted birds. Periyar National Park is one of the largest reserves in South India and is set around a large man-made lake. We return to the hotel for breakfast.

In the afternoon, there is a possibility to do an **Optional Boat Ride** on Periyar Lake. This is an ideal opportunity to get close to the animals and a good opportunity to spot elephants, otters, wild pigs and buffaloes. On offer here is **Ayurvedic massage (optional)**, which can be arranged in the nearby **Ayurvedic massage center**.

☕ Breakfast	Abad Green Forest - Resort, Thekkady
🏠 Accommodation	Abad Green Forest - Resort, Thekkady

## Day 11. Travel to Backwaters of Kerala



Periyar (Thekkady)   
🚗 115km - ⌚ 3h 15m  
kumarakom 


- Drive to **Kumarakom**, serene beauty of backwaters. One can spend the entire stay peacefully with pleasure and delight simply by taking nature strolls through the small piece of heaven. Arrive and check-in at hotel.

Later, discover local lifestyle, traditions, culture and crafts. Visit **local village** to experience making of coir, Toddy is extracted from coconut trees and meeting with locals. Evening, enjoy a canoe ride through narrow canals of backwaters.

☕ Breakfast	Abad Green Forest - Resort, Thekkady
🏠 Accommodation	Hotel Whispering Palms

## Day 12. Visit of Venice of East



kumarakom   
🚗 35km - ⌚ 1h

- In the morning, we drive along the old coast road to **Alleppey** riding through the town following the canal. We arrive at a traditional Kerala house near the town of Alleppey. We can spend time in the garden of this simple lodging, looking out over the expanse of **Vembanad Lake**.
- Alleppey also known as Alappuzha, the town is also called the Venice of the East and is the main center for cruises through the Kerala's picturesque backwaters. After arrival we board our houseboats and begin our cruise through meandering waterways. This is one of the highlights of the trip. The enchanting houseboat, built of Anjili wood and bamboo, was the traditional method of transport of goods for hundreds of years. Now these boats are decorated and made into comfortable cruise boats. The network of rivers, streams, lagoons and canals occupies the alluvial plain between the Western Ghats and the Indian Ocean. As our boat



Alappuzha (Alleppey) 📍

meanders through areas of lush tropical vegetation we have the opportunity to view not only the prolific birdlife but to gain a different perspective of village life around these canals. Our overnight stay is in the middle of Vembanad Lake where our boat stands anchored.

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🍳 Breakfast	Hotel Whispering Palms
🍴 Lunch	ATDC Houseboat
🍷 Dinner	ATDC Houseboat
🏠 Accommodation	ATDC Houseboat

## Day 13. City popular for fishing nets

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Alappuzha (Alleppey) 📍  
🚗 60km - ⌚ 1h 30m  
Cochin (Kochi) 📍

- Today we have breakfast on the houseboats while they move from their overnight mooring point to our Disembarkation point where we see our vehicles waiting for us. From here we drive to Cochin, and after checking into the hotel we spend the rest of the day the way we want.
- Later, we visit Fort Kochi, founded by the Portuguese in 1503 and it is considered to be one of the earliest site chosen by European colonial power. An odour of spice emerges from warehouses and food stalls offering different delicacy is common sight in each nook and corner of the town. In the afternoon we enjoy a sightseeing tour of Mattancherry Palace, built by the Portuguese as a gift for the Raja of Kochi, the Jewish synagogue dating from 1568 and **St Francis church**. We also explore the town of Kochi, its bazaars and old harbour area. In the evening there is the chance for an **optional visit** to see a display of Kathakali, a form of classical dance unique to Kerala.

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🍳 Breakfast	ATDC Houseboat
🏠 Accommodation	Fort Queen

## Day 14. See you next time

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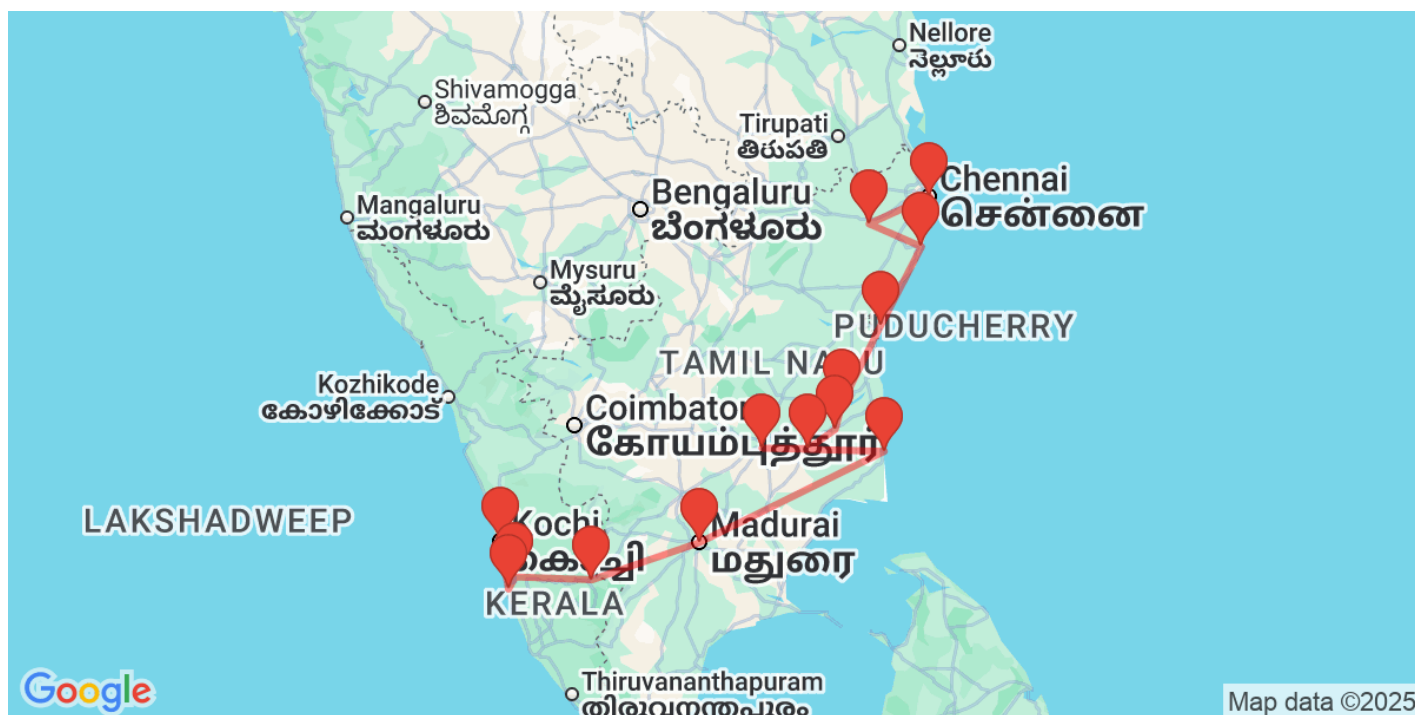
Cochin (Kochi) 📍

- Today morning, our tour gets ended here and will be transferred to the Cochin airport for our onward flight.

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🍳 Breakfast	Fort Queen
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## Itinerary map



## Individual price per person

2-3	4-5	6-8	9-12
2015 USD	1790 USD	1670 USD	1590 USD

## Included

- Accommodation for 12 nights in a double room in the hotels mentioned or equivalent on breakfast basis
- 01 night on Full board in a Houseboat in Alleppey
- All ground transportation included in the program using private air-conditioned vehicle with English speaking driver
- Entrance fees to the park and monuments as described in the program
- Jungle walk in Periyar National Park
- Local English-speaking guides as described in the program (Till 05 Pax)
- Professional English-speaking tour leader throughout India ( From 06 Pax onwards)
- Govt. Taxes

## Not included

- International flight tickets
- Travel insurance
- These rates will not be valid for peak season from 20 December 2021 to 10 January 2022 , Christmas and New Year's extra supplement cost will be charged during this period
- Lunches and dinners during the trip except Alleppey
- Miscellaneous Expenses - drinks, souvenir, personal expenses etc.
- Tips for driver and other local staff
- Charges for Camera in the monuments and Parks
- The cancellation and baggage insurance, assistance and repatriation
- Indian Visa
- All services not mentioned in "inclusion"