

SPECTACULAR SOUTH

16 days/15 nights

The leitmotif of southern culture is its tapestry of magnificent temple architecture going back to the 6th century; the unaltered traditions of food, religion and lifestyle; handicrafts; heritage of sandalwood, silk, rosewood and brass; and, of course, the grandeur of classical dance and music. Bejewelled by a spectacular coastline, Southern India is a vivid kaleidoscope of landscapes, magnificent historical sites, temples, palaces, royal cities and quaint hamlets, excellent golden beaches, misty mountain retreats, backwaters (canals), houseboats, colourful people, rich cultures and festivals.

ITINERARY

Day 1

Bangalore

Welcome at Bangalore Airport followed by transfer to your hotel.

Day 2

Bangalore-Belur-Halebid-Hassan (265 kms, 6 hrs)

Today's highlight will be a visit to the exquisite Hoysala Temples of Belur and Halebid. B

Day 3

Hassan -Sravana Belgola-Srirangapattana-Mysore (150 kms, 3½ hrs)

En route to Mysore, explore Sravana Belgola, one of the oldest and most important Jain pilgrimage sites in India, and the palace of Tipu Sultan which was completed in 1791. B

Day 4

Mysore

Visit the imposing palaces, majestic temples and gardens of Mysore, and view some of its exotic sandalwood and rich silks. B

Day 5

Mysore-Chennai-Mahabalipuram

Travel by train this afternoon to Chennai, and transfer to your hotel on arrival. B

Day 6

Mahabalipuram-Kanchipuram-Mahabalipuram

Today a visit will be made to the world famous Rock Temple on the seashore at Mahabalipuram, and Kanchipuram, famous for its silk and temples. B

Day 7

Mahabalipuram-Pondicherry (165 kms, 3 hrs)

Drive south to Pondicherry and visit the French city of India, with its 18th century Colonial buildings flanking the seashore boulevard. B

Day 8

Pondicherry-Tanjore (231kms – 4½ hrs)

Continue on to Tanjore this morning where a short tour will introduce you to some of its treasures. B

Day 9

Tanjore-Chettinad-Madurai (210kms – 5 hrs)

Drive to Madurai, en route visiting the fabulous Chettiar Mansions. Enjoy typical Chettiar cuisine for lunch at a charming 75-year-old Chettinad Bungalow. This evening witness the closing ceremony at Meenakshi Temple. B

Day 10

Madurai

You will discover the main highlights of Madurai on a half-day city tour this morning. B

Day 11

Madurai-Periyar (186 kms, 4 hrs)

Drive up into the hills to Periyar enjoying a late afternoon boat cruise on Periyar Lake to see the wildlife in the sanctuary. B

Day 12 **Periyar**

Free day to relax or take a nature walk around the spice gardens and perhaps enjoy some Ayurvedic treatments. B

Day 13 **Periyar-Kumarakom**

You will be driven to Kumarakom this morning in the heart of the fascinating backwaters, with the rest of the day at leisure. B

Day 14 **Kumarakom-Houseboat**

Spend a peaceful day and night on board a Kettuvallam houseboat exploring the peaceful backwaters (canals). BLD

Day 15 **Alleppey-Cochin**

After breakfast on the houseboat, drive to Cochin. A visit to Cochin this afternoon will include the Dutch Palace, Jewish Synagogue and Chinese Fishing Nets. B

Day 16 **Cochin**

Free morning. This evening you will be transferred to the airport for your onward or homeward flight. B