

# EXPLORE!



BEST SELLER

DISCOUNTED

## Backroads of Kerala

INDIA - TRIP CODE CKB

CYCLING

### Why book this trip?

A cycling holiday in southern India along Kerala's backwaters and inland through a landscape of spice, tea and rubber plantations. Discover village life, search for wildlife in Periyar National Park and relax on Indian Ocean beaches.

- **Backroad cycling** - Pedal along beautiful coastlines, through plantations and tropical forests
- **Kochi** - Explore this fascinating colonial coastal town
- **Kovalam** - Relax on the stunning beaches on the Malabar Coast.



**INCLUDED MEALS**  
Breakfast: 12  
Lunch: 3  
Dinner: 4



**TRIP STAFF**  
Explore Tour  
Leader / Cycle  
guide  
Assistant Cycle  
Guide  
Bike Mechanic  
Boat Crew  
Driver(s)



**TRANSPORT**  
Bus  
Bicycle  
Boat



**ACCOMMODATION**



**CYCLING GRADE:**  
Easy



**GROUP SIZE:**  
10 - 16

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## Trip information

### Country information

#### India

##### Climate

There is considerable variation between the different regions of India but, in general, the climate is tropical. Summer temperatures on the plains are very hot, but cooled by the South-West Monsoon, which lasts from June- September. During these months it can be very wet and therefore very humid. At altitude, temperatures can become quite cool at night even in the summer and may drop below freezing between December and February so warm clothing is necessary. In the winter, northern and mid India can be very cool, with cold evenings, so warm clothing, including plenty of layers, are essential. The south of India remains warm and sunny during the winter months.

##### Time difference to GMT

+5

##### Plugs

3 Pin Round

##### Religion

Catholicism, Hindu, Islam and Sikhism

##### Language

Hindi and English.

### Budgeting and packing

## Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Kochi - Kathakali dancing GBP 6.50

## Clothing

Bear in mind that the area is tropical with high humidity. Lightweights are needed all year round with some warmer clothes (ie fleece and long trousers) for the cooler winter evenings (November to March) in Wagamon. When cycling: quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts and cycling gloves are strongly recommended as they will protect you from sunburn and may also help protect your hands if you fall. Bring a swimming costume for the beaches. Whilst cycling in shorts is acceptable and expected, please note that for visits to temples and city sightseeing, tight fitting sleeveless t-shirts, brief or tight shorts and miniskirts should be avoided, since they attract unwelcome attention.

## Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling.

Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike, particularly for walking in the national park and around Wagamon.

## Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

# Tipping

## Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

## Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly you should allow approx. GBP 45 for gratuities for local staff.

## India

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£8	£10	£3	£0.5

### Foreign Exchange

#### Local currency

Indian Rupee Recently new 500 and 2000 rupee notes have been bought in to circulation and as the old notes are no longer accepted there have been some cash flow issues. You don't need to worry about being given old notes as it's very easy to tell the difference, the new notes are pristine in comparison with most Indian money which is fairly tatty.

#### Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP/US\$ are the best currency to change into local currency.

#### Where To Exchange

The Indian rupee is a restricted currency and it is best not to obtain in the UK as rates are very poor. You can either change money at the airport on arrival or in major towns during the tour. Your Tour Leader will advise you on the best places in each town. Both GBP and USD cash are easy to exchange at the airport and at hotels however you will be restricted to changing £60 cash at a time and it's not possible to change money at these locations using a credit or debit card.

#### ATM Availability

ATMs are available in most large cities in India but they are very limited elsewhere so please do not rely on this.

#### Credit Card Acceptance

Very rarely, only in the larger outlets.

#### Travellers Cheques

Opportunities to exchange are limited.

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## **Transport, Accommodation & Meals**

### **Transport Information**

Bus, Bicycle, Boat

### **Accommodation notes**

Standard - Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Gabby World Homestay, Mancombu - stay at traditional community based and eco-friendly, rural village homes set in lush countryside. Staying with a local family allows us to experience the typical lifestyle and cuisine of Kerala. Most houses have guest rooms within the main home, each with a private guest bathroom (not always en-suite). A few houses have a separate guest annexe. The rooms are simply furnished, with twin or double beds. Towels and bedding are provided.

Planters Homestay, Near Wagamon - This is a spacious and comfortable two storey family mansion house, built over 50 years ago and located in a small rural village. It has bright and airy guest rooms, all en-suite. Some, but not all rooms have air conditioning. The house is surrounded by lush gardens with rubber and tropical fruit trees plus palms and tall teaks and lots of bird life.

Please be advised that accommodation in India is as varied as the country itself. On our tours we stay in a mix of hotels, heritage properties and homestays. Standards do not equate to standards in the UK and it's best to approach each type of accommodation with an open mind. Service can be slow in places especially when travelling with a group. For the most part hotels do not have heating so in the winter months it can be chilly and if you feel the cold you may wish to ask for extra blankets. Hot water is not always available 24 hours a day in some of the smaller properties, and with a group staying you might find if you are showering last you may miss out on the hottest water.

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## **Essential Information**

### **FCO Advice**

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

### **Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

## Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

## Visa and Passport Information

India: Holders of passports endorsed 'British citizen' may be eligible for the e-Tourist Visa to enter India.

The visa can be applied for through the official Indian government visa website only - <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>. Please check all eligibility criteria that can be found on the website but important points are listed below -

You must be arriving into one of 24 selected entry points which can be found via the official Indian Government website link above. However, you can exit from any of the authorised immigration check posts in India.

Passports must have at least 6 months validity from the date of arrival in India and at least two blank pages for stamping. The visa application will take approximately 4 days to process. It is valid for 60 days from the date of arrival in to India, and double entry is permitted on the e-Tourist visa. You can only obtain 2 e-visas for India in a calendar year.

The visa costs approximately \$100, however these costs are subject to frequent change so you should check on the official Indian government visa website mentioned above. Biometric data will be collected on arrival in India.

Whilst the online form offers a relatively quick way to apply for a visa, a number of applicants have reported difficulty in completing the form. Travcour will complete the on-line visa on your behalf for a fee of £30 + the visa cost. Please contact them directly if you wish to take up this service.

If you are not eligible for the e-Tourist Visa, please refer to VFS Global to apply for your Indian visa - [http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/how\\_to\\_apply.html](http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/how_to_apply.html).

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

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It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

## Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

## Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

### **Flight Information**

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### **Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore**

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

### **Ability to swim**

An ability to swim is essential for your safe enjoyment of the water based activities on this trip. If you wish to participate in these activities then we insist that you are able to swim.

## **India**

### **Vaccinations**

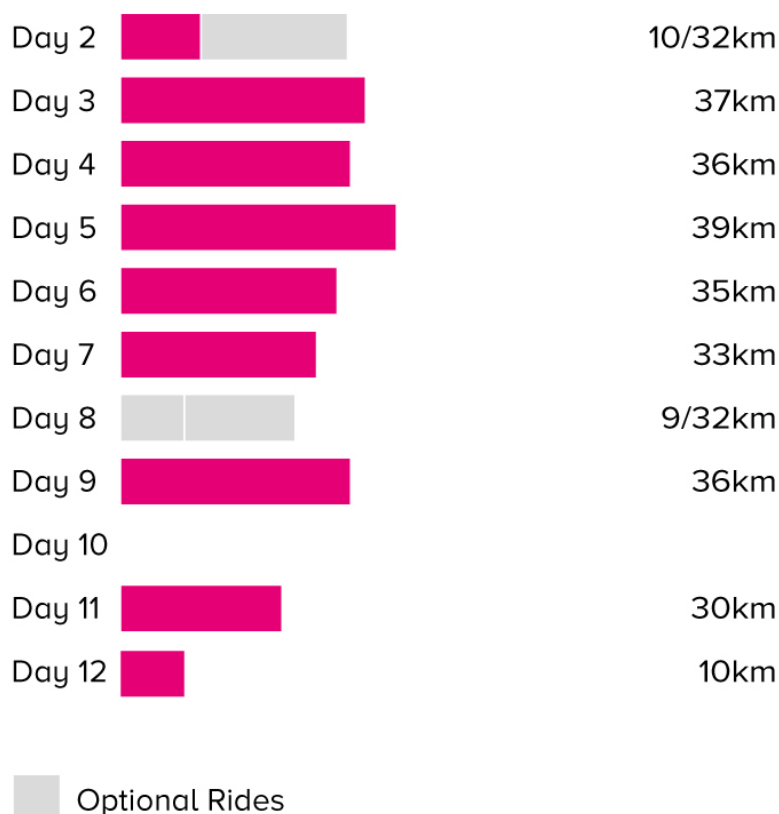
Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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### **Cycling information**



## DAILY DISTANCES



### General cycling information

On this tour we cycle 269 km over ten days (an average of 27 km per day) with further optional rides available. We avoid main roads where possible and cycle mainly on tarmac back roads (90%) and some gravel paths (10%). A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We have graded the route as easy.

### Bike included

21 or 24 gear Trek or Merida mountain bikes with lockable front suspension

### Bike information

Your included bike is either a 21 or 24 gear Trek 3700 mountain bike with front suspension or 3 Merida matts-20D and 40D and will be the correct frame size for your height. A 2.5 litre handlebar bag and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

### Cycling grade

Easy



**AWARD WINNING  
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE  
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT  
TRANSFERS**