

## Highlights of Southern India

INDIA - TRIP CODE DS

DISCOVERY

### Why book this trip?

This two-week journey is the perfect introduction to India's varied south. As we wind our way around the region we discover intricately carved temple complexes, ornate palaces and lush scenery in the tropical south-west.

- **From January 2020 we have changed the itinerary** - as well as reversing the route, we are now including Pondicherry and two nights in Bandipur National Park. Please click on the date you want, to choose the correct itinerary.
- **Palaces and temples** - Visit the ornate Maharajah's Palace in Mysore and discover the colourful Meenakshi Temple in Madurai
- **Bandipur National Park** - Search for endemic wildlife including elephant, chital and bison

- **Kochi and surrounds** - Explore the Portuguese influenced city including the Chinese fishing nets and cruise the nearby backwaters

					
<b>INCLUDED MEALS</b> Breakfast: 14 Lunch: 1 Dinner: 1	<b>TRIP STAFF</b> Explore Tour Leader Boat Crew Driver(s) Local Guide(s)	<b>TRANSPORT</b> Bus 4WD Boat Train	<b>ACCOMMODATION</b> 1 nights simple boat 11 nights comfortable hotel 1 nights premium hotel 1 nights simple overnight train	<b>TRIP PACE:</b> Moderate	<b>GROUP SIZE:</b> 12 - 18

## Itinerary

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

### DAY 1 - Join trip in Chennai (Madras)

Arrive in Chennai (Madras); Capital of India's southern state of Tamil Nadu, the city is one of the most important economic hubs of the country, partly due to its role in the development of the automotive industry in India.

For those arriving on time today our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 2pm for the welcome meeting and to take us on a walk around the southern neighbourhood of Mylapore. Older than Chennai itself, Mylapore is an affluent and characterful quarter, home to a variety of cultural and historical sites as well as buildings influenced by the European colonies. As part of our walk we will visit the Kapaleeshwar Hindu Temple, rebuilt after it was destroyed by the Portuguese in the 16th century and the Roman Catholic Luz Church (Our Lady of Light).

If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Chennai International Airport (MAA), which is 1 hour/20 km from the hotel.

Please note that if you wish to join the Mylapore tour today, you must arrive at the hotel by 2pm. If you are booking your own flights, we recommend giving yourself at least one hour to clear the airport. From the airport to the hotel is around one hour's drive, so therefore the latest your flight can arrive is 12pm. Should you miss the welcome meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up.





ACCOMMODATION:  
The Pride Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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## DAY 2 - Drive to Pondicherry via Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary and discover the town's French Quarters

This morning we drive to Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary, approximately two hours drive from Chennai. The sanctuary is a protected area and an important breeding ground for large migrating birds such as herons, cormorants, storks, ibises, pelicans as well as other smaller species such as pintails and sandpipers. Migrating season is generally from November to March and in the height of breeding season there can be thousands of birds here (Please note Vedanthangal bird sanctuary is closed from 31st May to the 31st October).

After this, we drive to Pondicherry where we will check in to our hotel and have lunch in the town's colonial French Quarters. The European influence both from a cultural and culinary perspective is very much alive here after the city remained under French reign until 1954. Many of the streets retain their French name and as we walk around we will see several bakeries and cafes serving up fresh baguettes, crepes, waffles and even croissants. The architecture also makes us feel as if we were in a Parisian suburb with whitewashed colourful mansions lining the streets and Pondicherry's own version of the Arc De Triomphe and Notre Dame church (Notre Dames des Agnes). We will also visit the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, a small spiritual community devoted to providing its members with a balanced and healthy life. The ashram has a real presence in the town as they also run a handmade paper factory, making all sorts of goods out of waste material including wind chimes, notebooks, paper bags and birthday cards.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Atithi (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 3 - Visit the Srirangam river island temples en route to Madurai**

Early this morning we leave Pondicherry and travel to Tiruchirappalli to discover the Srirangam Hindu Temple. Located on an island, at the confluence of the Kaveri and Kollidam Rivers, the temple complex is one of the largest in India and is dedicated to Lord Vishnu, one of the main deities of Hinduism. We will also visit the river ghats at Amma Mandapam, where devotees and residents of Srirangam and the surrounding areas come to bathe.

After lunch, we will continue our journey towards Madurai, where we will arrive in the late afternoon. Madurai is a city at the heart of the Tamil and Dravidian cultures. Of huge importance to Hindus, Madurai is known as the 'Nectar City' as it is believed drops of nectar dropped from goddess Siva's locks here. In the evening we plan to visit the impressive Meenakshi Temple for the evening 'bed ceremony' where the image of Siva is carried from its shrine to join his consort Pavarti in a separate part of the temple. All ceremonies carried out at Hindu temples are very spiritual as devotees say their prayers and bring offerings such as flower garlands and food to their gods. During this ceremony we may also see musicians, temple singers and priests accompany the image of the god to their resting place for the night.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Fortune Pandiyan (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 4 - Explore the colourful Meenakshi Temple and Thirumalai Nayak Palace in Madurai**

This morning we will return to the 16th century Meenakshi Temple for a closer look around. The temple features imposing gopurams (monumental gates) and dominating colourful towers that rise above the chaotic exuberance of the seemingly endless throngs of pilgrims. We will also visit the stunning

Thirumalai Nayaka Palace, a 17th century building with impressive archways framing the indoor courtyard.

This afternoon has been left free in Madurai, where you can choose to visit the Gandhi Memorial Museum, housing a small collection of artefacts belonging to the iconic figure. Alternatively you can visit the flower market where thousands of marigolds, tuberose and roses amongst others are traded each day.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Fortune Pandiyan (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 5 - Drive to Thekkady and learn all about Indian spices with a tour of a spice garden

Today we drive west towards Thekkady and the south-western state of Kerala. The drive is roughly around five hours but as we climb through the scenery of the Western Ghats mountain range, we discover an ever-changing landscape which becomes noticeably greener in the form of spice plantations and rolling verdant hills.

After checking in to our hotel, we will learn a little about how Indian spices are grown and processed with a walking tour of a spice garden. India is the world's largest exporter and consumer of spices and the soil composition in the area is ideal for growing cardamon, cloves, nutmeg, pepper and cinnamon.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Abad Green Forest (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 6 - Board a houseboat and sail through the tranquil Kerala backwaters**

This morning we drive to the Kerala Backwaters, a network of low-lying waterways, lagoons and rivers running parallel to the Arabian Sea. Often lined with tropical plants and palm trees they are a haven for a variety of birdlife and also villages that dot the many shores. We board our houseboat around midday for an exotic journey, chugging in unhurried style on waterways used by villagers to connect each of the communities. We dock in the middle of the waterways before dusk and watch the sun go down over the horizon.

Converted from old rice-barges, the houseboats we use are simple yet comfortable vessels which have an en-suite room and an area to relax and watch riverside life as we go by. Whilst the engine boat is running there will be some power supply to charge cameras and the air conditioning will be limited to night time only.



ACCOMMODATION:

Kerala Houseboat (or similar)



Grade: Simple Boat



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

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### **DAY 7 - Travel to the fort city of Kochi. Afternoon optional Kathakali performance or a local cookery class**

After disembarking our houseboat, we drive to the fort town of Kochi. With a beautiful natural harbour that earned it the title of 'Queen of the Arabian Sea', the town was founded on trade from Jewish and Arab spice traders in the first century AD. Its prosperity and importance increased even more with the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century, closely followed by the Dutch and the English, an eclectic heritage that helped produce a fascinating mix of styles and influences.

After lunch, we will walk around the fort and get our first look at the Chinese Fishing nets. First

introduced by Chinese explorers in the 14th century, this style of fishing is rarely found in India and they have become a symbol of Kochi.

The rest of the day will be left free and there is an option to enjoy a Kathakali dance performance. Thought by some to be the very essence of the culture of Kerala. The intricate make-up is unique and often dancers can take up to three hours painting their faces - the features are heavily emphasised as it is the facial expressions and coordinated eye movements which are important in the dance. Alternatively you may wish to learn about south Indian cuisine with a cookery class at a local home. During the class you'll learn to cook typical Keralan dishes including coconut milk curries and crispy laced rice pancakes, whilst chatting to your hosts about their life and culture.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Abad Pepper Route (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 8 - Walk around fort Kochi and take a sunset cruise around the harbour

After a leisurely breakfast, we will head towards Kochi's Mattancherry Palace and explore this colonial gem. Built by the Portuguese in the 16th century, it underwent extensive renovations by the Dutch some hundred years later, which earned it its name as 'The Dutch Palace'. Today it houses murals depicting scenes from the Ramayana and other great legends. Whilst in Kochi's Jewish quarter we will visit the oldest active synagogue in India, the Paradesi Jewish synagogue. This area is also great for a variety of interesting stores including antique warehouses and spice auction rooms which we hope to visit. Later we will also visit St Francis Church, another fascinating example of the melting pot of cultures which have brushed past this fort town and left their mark. The church was the original burial site of Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama before being returned to his native Portugal as his final resting place. Later in the afternoon we will take a cruise in Kochi's harbour to watch the sun setting over the Chinese fishing nets.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Abad Pepper Route (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel





SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 9 - Explore the well preserved 18th century Palakkad Fort en route to Coimbatore**

Today we have a long drive ahead of us as we head north-east back into the state of Tamil Nadu and the city of Coimbatore. On the way we will stop in Palakkad to admire the 18th century fort. Unlike sandstone examples seen in India's Northern state of Rajasthan, Palakkad Fort is built out of granite and is surrounded by grass and a large water moat around it. After exploring the fort we will continue our drive towards Coimbatore, a journey of two hours approximately. Dinner is included tonight in Coimbatore as you get the opportunity to sample some south Indian delicacies such as savoury dosas served on a banana leaf with different chutneys, pickles and vegetables.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Zibe Coimbatore by GRT (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 10 - Ride the toy train to 'Snooty Ooty' and drive to Bandipur National Park**

Early this morning we travel towards Coonoor to board the toy train along the Niligiri Mountain Railway. Built by the British in the late 19th century to negotiate an otherwise difficult terrain, an old locomotive will pull us up the hill through dense green forest landscapes as we cover a distance of 19km from Coonoor to Ooty in about one and a half hours. The toy train has been running for many years so there are times where it doesn't run due to maintenance or when the weather is poor. In such circumstances we will drive to Ooty instead, which still makes for a scenic journey through the hills.

The town of Ooty, often referred to as 'Snooty Ooty' was once a colonial hill station and home to officials from the British East India Company looking to escape from the threat of the southern lowlands. On arrival we will have lunch and have a short tour of the town including a visit to the town's botanical gardens, home to more than 1000 varieties of plants and trees arranged in a colourful way. Afterwards we will continue our journey towards Bandipur National Park.





ACCOMMODATION:  
Windflower Tusker Trails (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 11 - Search for wildlife on two game drives in Bandipur National Park

Today is a day dedicated to searching for wildlife with both morning and afternoon drives in Bandipur National Park included. The park was once the hunting ground for the Maharajah of Mysore but is today a thriving nature reserve made primarily out of dry deciduous forest. Some of the wildlife we hope to see includes chital (spotted deer), monkeys (especially langur), mongoose, sloth bear and gaur (Indian bison). The park's elephant population is one of the largest in the country and we may see some of them walking in the forest. Though less common, there have also been sightings of leopard and tiger and there is a variety of birdlife such as crested hawk and serpent eagle.

Our wildlife drives in the park are usually at dawn and just before dusk in the afternoon when the animals are most active. Our safari drives will be in 4WD trucks designed for viewing wildlife. Each safari will be around three to four hours including our drive towards the park but will of course depend on the wildlife we get the chance to see.

In between the drives we will have some time to relax back at our lodge just outside of the park. There is the option to relax by the swimming pool, enjoy a massage or take a nature walk around the resort.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Windflower Tusker Trails (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

### **DAY 12 - Early morning optional safari and drive to Mysore for a sound and light show at Mysore Palace**

Early this morning we have the option to take one final drive in the park in search of wildlife. Alternatively, enjoy a leisurely breakfast before we drive north towards Mysore. So called the 'City of Palaces', Mysore is today renowned as the cultural capital of Karnataka and home to one of the most ornate palaces in south India, the Maharajah's Mysore Palace, which we plan to visit tomorrow.

After checking into our accommodation we will visit the Chamundi Hills area just outside of the city. Offering views over Mysore, the hills are home to an impressive Hindu Temple and the Nandi statue. This giant black granite bull statue is considered the vehicle of Lord Siva and is an icon of the city of Mysore. Later in the evening we will head to Mysore Palace for a sound and light show displayed on the facade of the building itself.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Southern Star Mysore (or similar)

Grade: Premium Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

### **DAY 13 - Explore Mysore's colourful market and the impressive Mysore Palace before taking an overnight train to Chennai**

After a leisurely breakfast we will take a visit to Mysore's Devaraja market. This vibrant market is a constant hive of activity as locals barter with sellers for the best deal. The market is a photographer's paradise with fruit, vegetable, flower and spice stalls often meticulously displayed.

After our visit to the market we will head towards Mysore's must see, the eccentric Mysore Palace. An eclectic mix of Hindu and British architecture, the palace was originally built in the 14th century and has undergone two subsequent re-buildings. Its opulence is demonstrated through its grand proportions, shiny marble floors, ivory doors and recognisable red domes on top of its main towers. After our sightseeing and an early dinner we will transfer to the railway station to board our overnight train to the city of Chennai.

Indian sleeper trains are a fantastic experience and a great way to meet people as we travel. We make our bookings in second class air-conditioned sleepers, which have four beds in each compartment and all bedding provided. Whilst we try to ensure the group is all together, due to overwhelming demand and the system for booking train tickets in India, it may not always be possible to have everyone in the same carriage and some reservations may be in 3rd class. In such cases our Tour Leaders will help everyone to find their seats and ensure you get the most out of your journey. For overnight trains, each berth is separated by curtains and has 4/6 bunk beds. Bedding (sheet, blanket and pillow) is provided but you may wish to bring your own sleeping liner for added comfort. Train travel in India is safe and civilised but for added security whilst you sleep it may be a good idea to bring a bike lock for your bags. If you do not wish to carry one with you, your tour leader can help you to purchase one locally before your train journey.



#### ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight train from Mysore to Chennai

**Grade: Simple Overnight Train**



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 14 - Travel to the coastal town of Mamallapuram, home to the fascinating shore temples**

Arriving in Chennai very early this morning we will make a quick stop for a traditional south Indian dosa breakfast. These thin flat crepes are made out of rice batter and often served with a side of chutney, potatoes and lentil sambars. Following breakfast we'll travel towards the shores of the Bay of Bengal and the town of Mamallapuram.

On arrival in Mamallapuram, we will check in to our hotel and enjoy some free time to relax before exploring the nearby shore temples. Mamallapuram was the chief harbour of the Pallavas Kingdom some 1200 years ago and a number of superb examples of its masterful rock carvings still exist today. We will walk around some of the areas most celebrated structures, including the 7th century Shore Temple - a UNESCO World Heritage site - and Ajuna's Penance, the world's largest bas-relief and one of the most impressive friezes in India. Although both have suffered at the hands of natural erosion over many centuries, a remarkable amount of detail still remains amongst the carvings.

The late afternoon has been left free to take an walk on Mamallapuram's sandy beaches or visit the market for some last minute shopping.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Mamalla Heritage (or similar)

**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 15 - Trip ends in Mamallapuram**

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Mamallapuram .

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Mamallapuram at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day, luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to depart from Chennai Airport (MMA), which is around two hours from the hotel.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## **Trip information**

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### **Climate and 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.

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## 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 - Traditional Kathakali Dancing £5.00.

### Clothing

Bear in mind that the area is tropical with high humidity. Light weight clothing is needed all year round with some warmer clothes for cooler evenings, particularly in winter (November-March) in the Nilgiri Hills. Due to the high chance of rain between October and December, it is advisable to take a rain jacket or umbrella during this time. Casual clothes are the most practical: tight fitting garments, brief shorts and skirts should be avoided, since they attract unwelcome attention. Shoes must be taken off for temple visits and you must always cover up arms and legs when going inside. You may want to take an old pair of socks to the temples as the floor can get very hot and difficult to walk on.

### Footwear

Comfortable shoes and sandals.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysac. Remember hotel porters are not always available, so don't overload yourself. Soft bags are preferable.

## Equipment

A torch is useful in case of powercuts/ emergencies. We advise taking a water bottle for day to day use.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. However, you might want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized 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, your leader may organise a group's tips kitty for included activities and meals and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow GBP45, approx. 3'800 Indian Rupees for group tipping.

For all non-included services and meals on your trip please tip independently at your discretion.

## 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, 4WD, Boat, Train

### **Accommodation notes**

Accommodation in India is as varied as the country itself. On our tours we stay in a mix of hotels, heritage properties, camp sites 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**

### **Government Travel Safety 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, Commonwealth & Development 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: Visas are required for citizens of the UK, Australia, New Zealand, US and Canada and can be obtained in the form of an e-visa. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

The e-visa can be applied for through the official Indian government visa website only - <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/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 28 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. Visa applications will take approximately 4 days to process.

There are different validity visas and the costs are as follows:

30-day validity (travelling between April and June) - \$10

30-day validity (travelling between July and March) - \$25

1-year validity - \$40

5-year validity- \$80

Those applying for a 30 day electronic visa can only apply within 30 days of arrival for your visa to be valid. Furthermore double entry is permitted and you can only obtain two 30-day visas in a calendar year.

Please note 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.

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

Whilst the online form offers a relatively quick way to apply for a visa, some applicants have reported difficulty in completing the form. If you do require assistance, then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. They can complete the online visa on your behalf for a fee of £30 + the visa cost. 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.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply 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.

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 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.

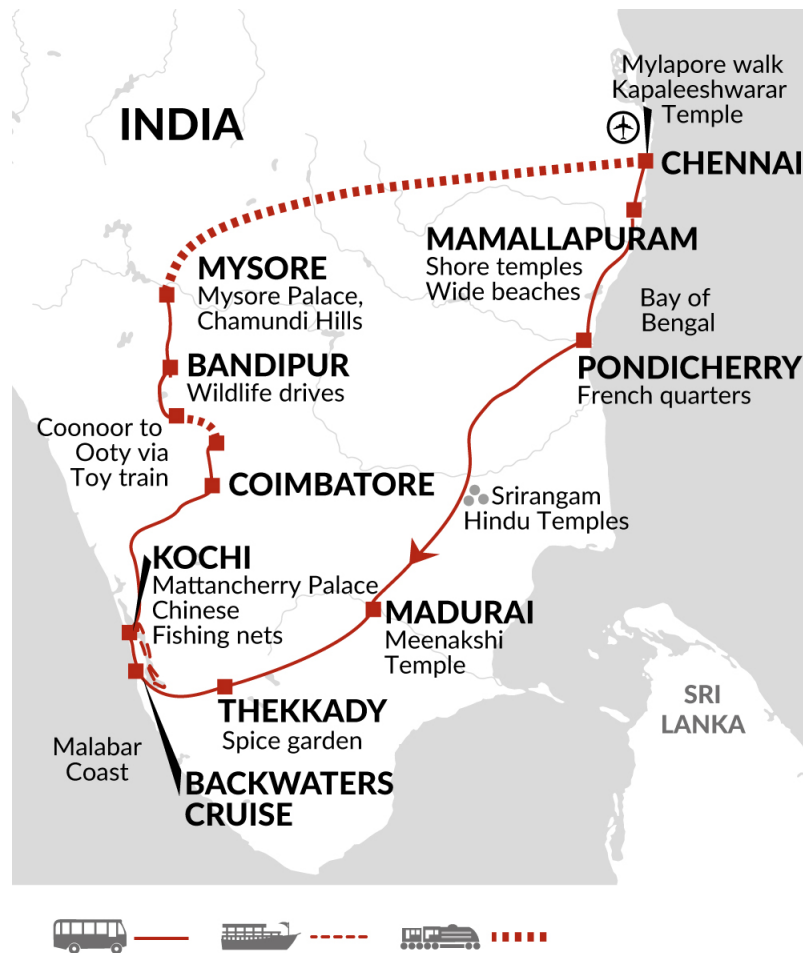
## **India**

### **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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## **Transport Information**



*Highlights of Southern India 2020 itinerary*

Travelling on an Indian train is a fantastic experience, with millions using the rail network every day it is the perfect opportunity to meet local families.

For all the train journeys on our trips, we will reserve your seats/berths in advance in 2nd class with air conditioning. Whilst we'll try to ensure the group is all together, due to overwhelming demand and the system for booking train tickets in India, it may not always be possible to have everyone in the same carriage and some reservations may be in 3rd class. In such cases our Tour Leaders will help everyone to find their seats and ensure you get the most out of your journey. For overnight trains, each berth is separated by curtains and has 4/6 bunk beds. Bedding (sheet, blanket and pillow) is provided but you may wish to bring your own sleeping liner for added comfort. Train travel in India is safe and civilised but for added security whilst you sleep it may be a good idea to bring a bike lock for your bags. If you do not wish to carry one with you, your tour leader can help you to purchase one locally before your train journey.

Please note that in January train journeys can sometimes be affected by fog. This may result in some last minute changes to the itinerary. In this eventuality we will endeavour to stick to the itinerary as closely as possible and will cover any extra costs incurred.

In order to make reservations on Indian trains and guarantee the smooth operation of

your trip, we require your full passport details. It is important that we receive these details as soon as possible so we are ready to make the arrangements as soon as train tickets are available to buy.

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## Reviews

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**AWARD WINNING  
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE  
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT  
TRANSFERS**