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South India Explorer

INDIA - TRIP CODE QDS

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

As we travel by several methods of transport, including iconic Indian trains, on this trip we trace a route from South India's Coromandel Coast to the Arabian Sea at Goa. Walk around intricately carved temples, cruise the idyllic backwaters of Kerala and see the contrasts of climbing to the cool heights of the Western Ghats.

- **Mamallapuram & Madurai** - Discover World Heritage coastal ruins and join the worshippers at the vibrant Meenakshi Temple
- **Kerala Backwaters** - Cruise through the beautiful backwaters of Kerala as you watch villages drift past you
- **Ooty & Hampi** - Ride the Toy Train to explore the hill station of the British Raj and explore the temples

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and ruins of the ancient Vijayanagar Empire

					
INCLUDED MEALS Breakfast: 14 Dinner: 1	TRIP STAFF Explore Tour Leader Boat Crew Driver(s)	TRANSPORT Bus Boat Public Bus Taxi Train	ACCOMMODATION 1 nights simple homestay 7 nights comfortable hotel 6 nights simple hotel 2 nights simple overnight train	TRIP PACE: Moderate	GROUP SIZE: 8 - 14

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join trip at Chennai Airport

Our trip begins at Chennai International Airport (MAA). There are two joining times, one at 9.30am and a second one at 3.00pm. The latest your flight can arrive is therefore is 08.45am or 2.15pm. Each group travels together by bus to Mamallapuram, set 2 hours along the coast from Chennai on the shores of the Bay of Bengal.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Mamalla Heritage (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



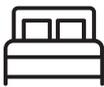
SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Take a walking tour to the Shore Temple of Mamallapuram

Mamallapuram was the chief harbour of the Pallavas Kingdom some 1200 years ago and a number of superb examples of its masterful carvings still exist in the so-called pagodas (actually 'rathas'). This morning there's the option to take a tour with your tour leader to view 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 centuries of natural erosion, a remarkable amount of detail still remains amongst the carvings. We will also explore the fascinating reliefs of the Mandapa Cave temples and the Five Rathas, 7th century monolithic temples that were sculptured out of the very rock that surrounds them. The rest of the day is then free to enjoy some of the many attractions of the area, perhaps relaxing on the beach, or exploring by foot or bicycle.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Mamalla Heritage (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



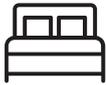
SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Free time to explore before overnight train to Madurai

Another day in Mamallapuram offers the opportunity for some more personal exploration, with the chance to visit either the nearby sights of Pondicherry or perhaps the Hope Foundation School at Pudipattinam. Pondicherry offers a charming mix of French colonial and Tamil heritage, whilst the school at Pudipattinam has been supported by Explore since the 2004 tsunami and is an inspiration to all who visit. Following dinner this evening we transfer to the railway station to catch the overnight train to Madurai and the cultural heartland of the Tamil and Dravidian cultures.



ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight Train from Chengalpattu to Madurai



Grade: Simple Overnight Train



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Time to explore Madurai's Meenakshi Temple

Arriving very early this morning, the rest of the day is free for sightseeing. Some of the options available include the stunning Tirumalai Nayaka Palace and the 16th century Meenakshi Temple, whose imposing gopurams (monumental gates) and dominating towers rise above the chaotic exuberance of the seemingly endless throngs of pilgrims. Another possibility is a visit to the exquisite Hindu Temple of Brahadeswara, a World Heritage site that encompasses some 400 years of the Chola Empire and includes within its main shrine the largest Lingham (the sacred Shiva fertility symbol) in India today. You may of course just wish to wander Madurai's vibrant streets, soaking up the colour and noise of its many bazaars and perhaps searching for a bargain or two amongst its myriad of craft and carpet shops.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Star Residency (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



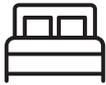
SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 5 - Drive across the Cardamom Hills to Quilon

Quilon lies in India's beautiful southwest, amongst the lush landscapes and hidden channels of Kerala and this morning a private bus takes us across the Cardamom Hills, towards the glittering waters of the Arabian Sea. The journey will take us a good part of the day, covering some 260 kms and crossing the cool foothills of the Western Ghats, through an ever-changing landscape of plantations and verdant greenery. Quilon itself lies along the shores of Ashtamudi Lake and has long been a major trading centre in this region. Indeed, this was one of the earliest centres of Christian activity in the region and provides us with our gateway into the remarkable natural beauty of India's Arabian coast.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Sea Pearl (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



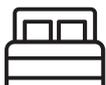
SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Take a motorboat through backwaters to our homestay

This morning we will cruise through the Backwaters by public motor boat from Quilon to Allepey, a journey time of some 8 hours and the perfect way to observe the colourful comings and goings on the waterways. Boats are the villagers' lifeline, acting as taxis, mail delivery, school buses and even cargo vessels. You may see great pyramids of coconuts or even the odd buffalo being carried along in this time honoured fashion! Along the narrow channels the industrious villagers survive on narrow spits of land, keeping cows, pigs, chickens and cultivating vegetable gardens. Even the shells from the fresh water mussels are burnt to make building lime, and coir is used for just about everything. This evening we stay in a traditional homestay, a fantastic opportunity to learn more about life in the Backwaters. In the late afternoon our hosts can organize a trip by traditional canoe.



ACCOMMODATION:
Gaaby World Homestay (or similar)



Grade: Simple Homestay

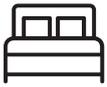


MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 7 - Drive to Kochi and explore the fort area

Continuing north today, we head for the bustling port of Kochi (Cochin) by private bus. With a beautiful natural harbour that earned it the title of 'Queen of the Arabian Sea', Kochi, as you might expect, was founded on trade, originally with the arrival of 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, to be closely followed by the Dutch and the English, an eclectic heritage that helped produce a fascinating mix of styles and influences. This afternoon we will enjoy a short orientation tour around Fort Kochi on

foot. You can find the oldest church and the oldest synagogue in India amongst its winding streets. We will take in the architectural charm of the Church of St Francis, where Vasco do Gama was buried for a while, as well as the port's famous cantilevered Chinese fishing nets.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Abad Fort Cochin (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Visit the Jewish Quarter or see Kathakali dancing

Today is left free to explore at your leisure. Fort Kochi is the oldest European settlement in India (1500), with a mix of English, Dutch and Portuguese architecture, making it a fascinating city to wander and discover either on foot or by auto-rickshaw . The Mattancherry Palace was built by the Portuguese in the 16th century, but extensive renovations by the Dutch some hundred years later earned it the name 'The Dutch Palace' and today it houses some of the best murals in India, depicting scenes from the Ramayana and other great legends. There is the option of taking a ferry across to nearby Ernakulam, or perhaps visiting the sumptuous grandeur of the Tripunithura Hill Palace, the impres-sive former residence of the Maharajas of Kochi. Kochi is also home to the famous Kathakali dance, thought by some to be the very essence of the culture of Kerala, por-traying as it does events from the great Indian epics of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Its origins may have come from traditional temple rituals and from an art form known as Koodiyattam. It is the face make up which makes this dancing so unique and dancers can take up to three hours painting their faces - the features are heavily emphasised as it is the facial expressions and co-ordinated eye movements which are important in the dance. This evening there may be an opportunity to view one of these remarkable performances for ourselves (optional).



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Abad Fort Cochin (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



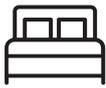
SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 9 - Travel to the hill station of Ooty

A morning train to Coimbatore takes us back across the Western Ghats, towards the old hill stations of the British Raj. After the short train ride we switch to a bus and drive the remaining distance to Ooty.



ACCOMMODATION:
Deccan Park Resort Ooty (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - Take a ride on the Toy Train

Today we take a short circular journey on the 'Toy Train' the only rack and pinion railway in Asia. Pulled by steam and crossing forested hills and girder bridges, the blue and cream carriages hark back to a golden age of engineering, when seemingly no hurdle could halt the ever-expanding British Empire. The railway itself can boast an interesting array of statistics, including a gradient of 1 in 12, no fewer than 208 curves and an impressive 13 tunnels. Given the terrain over which it has to negotiate it is also probably the slowest train in the country, averaging just 10.5km an hour. Whilst traditionally the Toy Train was pulled by steam engines these days they are mostly pulled by diesel engines. The rest of the afternoon is free to explore something of Ooty's natural and colonial charms at your leisure.



ACCOMMODATION:
Deccan Park Resort Ooty (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



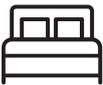
SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Travel by public bus to Mysore

Departing Ooty today we take a public bus north, to the city of Mysore, famed for its silk and sandalwood as well as its Dasara festivities. The so called 'City of Palaces', it was, until the middle years of the last century, the heart of the regal state of Mysore. Today it is renowned as the cultural capital of Karnataka. Depending upon our departure time from Ooty, there may be time later this afternoon for some exploration of the city before dinner.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Adeline Mysore (or similar)

Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 12 - Discover Mysore before the sleeper train to Hospet

Today there's a chance to visit some of the cities cultural highlights, including the sumptuous grandeur of the Maharajah's Palace. Originally built in the 14th century, the palace has undergone two subsequent re-buildings (the most recent being in 1912 when the palace was redesigned by the English architect Henry Irwin). Today it is an opulent mix of Hindu and British architecture, filled with stained glass, mirrored halls and a fascinating mix of the elegant and the gaudy. The Chamundi Hills that overlook the city are home to the towering Sri Chamundeswari Temple and the giant representation of Shiva's sacred bull, Nandi, which was carved from a single piece of rock in the 17th century and is one of the largest in the country. Later today we depart the city and board the overnight train to Hospet, our gateway onto the fabulous World Heritage sites of Hampi.



ACCOMMODATION:
Overnight Train from Mysore to Hospet

Grade: Simple Overnight Train

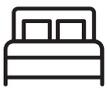




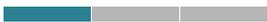
MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 13 - Transfer to the ancient Vijayangar capital, Hampi

Arriving in Hospet early this morning we continue on to Hampi by taxi. The flourishing capital of the Vijayanagar Kings between the 14th to 16th centuries, Hampi was once the powerbase of one of the largest Hindu empires in Indian history. The sudden destruction of the city, following the Battle of Taikota in 1565, saw it abandoned by its people, leaving behind a ruined city that, even today, still conjures up something of the spirit of its long departed occupants. This afternoon you can choose to explore something of the ruins, or just enjoy a stroll through the wonderful countryside that surrounds these ethereal structures.



ACCOMMODATION:
Shanthi Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 14 - A free day to explore the ruins and temples of Hampi

At its peak, Hampi was reputedly the size of Rome, with nearly half a million people occupying its city streets. Today has been left free to explore its numerous temples and monuments, one of the most remarkable examples of South Indian Dravidian architecture anywhere in India. There are the stunning carvings that adorn the temples of Virupaksha and Vittala, the sculptured pillars of the Ramachandra Swami Shrine and the wonderful two-storied Lotus Pavilion, all providing rich testament to one of the most powerful Hindu dynasties that ever existed.



ACCOMMODATION:
Shanthi Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel





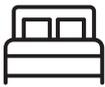
SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 15 - Take the day train to Goa

We catch another train this morning, crossing over the Western Ghats to Margaon in Goa, the one-time Portuguese colony on the Arabian Sea. Under Alfonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese landed here in the 16th century, capturing the original Arab trade settlement and building a city festooned with gardens and fountains, monasteries and churches, most of them sadly now gone. Goa became a rich source of trade, bringing east and west together to trade pearls and rubies, exotic spices and Chinese porcelain. This eclectic mix of cultural influences has had a marked effect on the region, with Catholicism still firmly entrenched and the Portuguese custom of afternoon siestas still widely practised in the heat of the afternoon. Food too plays a big part in Goa's heritage, with pork vindaloo being a particularly popular dish and the locally brewed feni - a spine-tingling spirit made from coconut or cashews - providing a favoured tippie.



ACCOMMODATION:

Welcome Heritage Panjim Inn (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 16 - Free time to explore Panjim or relax on the beach

A free day today, you may choose to tour a spice plantation or to explore Panaji, Goa's easy going capital; a friendly, sleepy town of narrow winding streets and whitewashed shuttered houses. The Malabar beaches here are very long and very white against the turquoise waters of the Arabian Sea and close to the capital you can find the superb beaches of Gaspar Dias and Dona Paula. Please be aware though of the strong undercurrents that can make some of these offshore waters dangerous. It is also possible to explore the beautiful Goan countryside by bicycle.



ACCOMMODATION:
Welcome Heritage Panjim Inn (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 17 - Trip ends in Goa

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Goa.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Goa 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 Goa's Dabolim Airport (GOI), which is around one and a half hours from the hotel.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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.

Mamallapuram Temple entrance 500 INR, tuk tuk 250INR one way, Return taxi to Pondicherry 6000 INR

Madurai Meenakshi Temple entrance 60 INR, Tirumalai Nayaka Palace 60 INR, transport by tuk tuk 250INR. Gandhi Museum entrance 50 INR

Mancombo Traditional wooden canoe ride 300-400 INR

Kochi Harbour Boat Cruise 3500 INR (small boat), Kathakali Dance 350 INR, Mattancherry Palace entrance 100 INR, Synagogue entrance 10 INR, Tripunithura Hill Palace, taxi and entrance 500 INR,

Mysore: Taxi/ tuk tuk to visit Maharajas Palace 250 INR, Palace entrance 250 INR, Chamundi Hill entrance 100 INR

Hampi: Entrance to Elephant Stables and Vittala Temple 600 INR

Goa: Spice plantation tour 450 INR (includes lunch as well) , transport 800-1000 INR per person (sharing basis)

Clothing

Bear in mind that the area is tropical with high humidity. Lightweights are 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 visit 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 daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so please don't overload yourself. It is possible at most stations to pay porters to carry your bags to and from the train however please be aware that the costs can seem high in comparison to other services. Most train stations have several sets of stairs to reach the platforms. It is worth packing light so you can carry

everything yourself.

Equipment

A torch is useful in case of powercuts/ emergencies. We advise you bring 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 GBP35, approx. 3'000 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.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Public Bus, Taxi, 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.

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 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: 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

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 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 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 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.

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.

Transport Information



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.

Reviews



AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE



AIRPORT
TRANSFERS