

INDIA
SOUTH

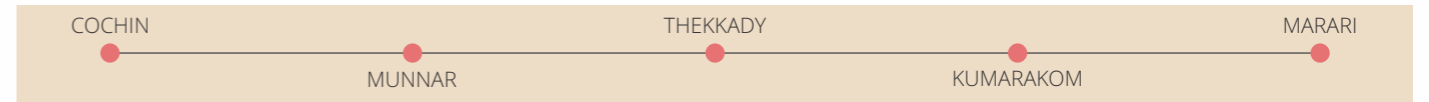


STH1 > 13 DAY TOUR

ESSENTIAL KERALA

Coastal Kerala boasts of emerald green paddy fields, groves of coconut trees swinging in the gentle breeze, rolling hills with acres of tea plantations, eternal rainforests, and the maze that is Kerala's backwaters located tantalisingly close to sandy beaches of the Arabian Sea. It is the perfect antidote to the big busy cities. Kerala's verdant greenery with all its spice plantations and gracious homes gleaming with the warmth of polished wood, make for a great contrast when combined with a Rajasthan tour.

Kerala is the most literate state of India and is also renowned for being amongst the few states in India where some communities practice the matrilineal system of hierarchy. Explore *God's Own Country* with its highly socialistic society, pluralistic culture and delicious coastal cuisine influenced by all the sea faring travellers who touched its shores.



Insider Tips:

- This itinerary is best done between October and April.
- It rains in Kerala from end of May to mid-September.
- November to February is the best time to watch migratory birds at the Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary, who come in from the Himalayas and from as far away as Siberia.
- The quirky Cochin Carnival is held at Fort Cochin on January 01 every year. It was started by the Portuguese in the 16th century as a celebration to welcome the new year.



AYURVEDA

Ayurveda is an ancient method of healing which was developed in India thousands of years ago. It is based on the premise that the universe is made up of five elements: air, fire, water, earth and ether. Ayurveda believes that all the five elements are also present in the human body which makes for a unique prakrati (constitution) in each one of us. The treatments are tailored according to each person's unique constitution.

TOUR ITINERARY | STH 1

DAY 01 ARRIVAL COCHIN

Warm welcome at the airport by our representative and transfer to the hotel.

DAY 02 IN COCHIN

Get acquainted with the city's history and heritage which is a wonderful mix of Dutch, Portuguese, British and Jewish influences. In the evening, take lessons on Syrian Christian cuisine from a local resident and enjoy dinner with the family. Kerala's Syrian Christians are the descendants of the first converts when St. Thomas landed here in 52 AD. Their contribution to Kerala cuisine has been manifold and the most noted dishes are *appams* (hoppers), duck roast, *meen vevichathu* (red fish curry) and the *isthew* (stew).

DAY 03 IN COCHIN

Go on a fun tour from Fort Cochin to the business district of Ernakulam and back, using public transport. Alternatively, enjoy a full day excursion of Muzuris – the Jerusalem of the East. Located 19 miles north of Cochin, this ancient port is said to have been first occupied around 1000 BC. Ideal for history and culture buffs, this is a fantastic insight into what is literally the cradle of several religions.

DAY 04 COCHIN – MUNNAR

Drive to the cooler climes of Munnar – south India's largest tea-growing region. Relax, breathe in the crisp air and enjoy the views of the rolling tea gardens.

DAY 05 IN MUNNAR

Enjoy a tea plantation walk followed by a Tea Tasting session at a private venue. Later, visit the Tea Museum. Spend a relaxed afternoon in the hotel or explore the surroundings on an easy hike.

DAY 06 MUNNAR – THEKKADY

Drive to Thekkady stopping en route to visit a plantation and have lunch at a local home.

DAY 07 IN THEKKADY

Depending upon the interest and fitness, one could either choose a walking tour, rafting on the Periyar Lake or cycle around the fertile plains bordering Tamil Nadu.

DAY 08 THEKKADY – KUMARAKOM

Drive to the backwaters of Kumarakom with its drenched greens and coconut palms. Enjoy a bird watching trip in the evening. The Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary has about 180 species of birds.

DAY 09 IN KUMARAKOM

An early morning trip to a fisherman's beach to watch boatmen bringing in their fresh catch for auction. Continue to a farmhouse for a traditional breakfast with a local family. Explore the backwaters, passing through verdant paddy fields and villages on the way back to the hotel.

DAY 10 KUMARAKOM – MARARIKULAM

Take a day cruise on a *Kettuvallam*. Originally these boats were used to ferry rice in the backwaters. Lunch



on board. Later drive to Mararikulam, a quiet fishing village for an enjoyable and relaxing three nights by the beach.

DAY 11/12 IN MARARIKULAM

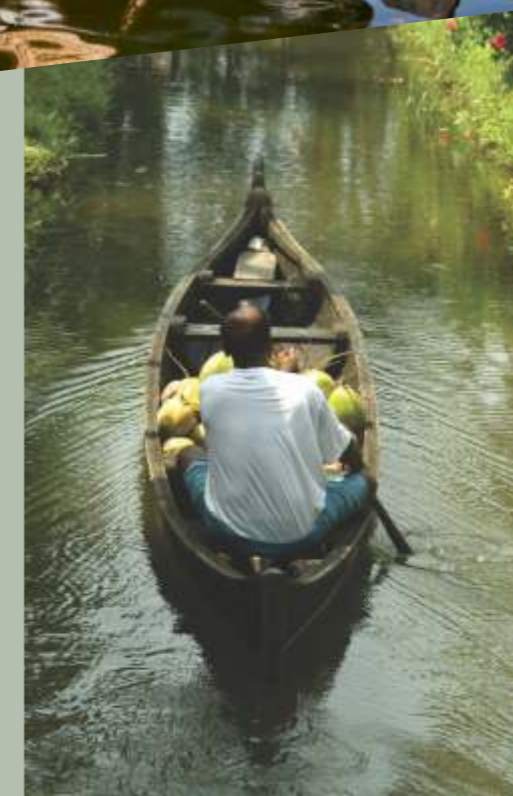
Spend time relaxing on the beach, in the pool or at the spa.

DAY 13 MARARIKULAM – COCHIN – DEPARTURE

Transfer to Cochin airport for the onward flight.



All our Guides are fluent in the local language – Malayalam. While most locals understand English, it may not be understood by all.



South India is the land of the coconut! Enjoy fresh coconut water, fresh off the tree!



Kerala is hot and humid for most part of the year.