

Slow Travel-A Cultural Trail on South India

Slow travel is the new normal post covid. Most of our South Indian serene destinations are much safer as the social distancing is an inbuilt character by Nature itself.

This is a well curated itinerary from our team for a special interest traveler. It has all elements of Nature, Lifestyle, Culture, Cuisine, Wildlife, Beach, Special Art Forms, Homestay Experiences and much more. Stays are well chosen for a different experience of authenticity rather than routine hotels. The itinerary gives a lot of opportunities for self exploration in most of the destinations. This itinerary can be customized further to match your travel tastes.

Day 01 – Arrival Cochin

On arrival at Cochin Airport, you will be met & transferred to your hotel/homestay at Fort Cochin. Rest of the day to relax. Evening watch a live Kathakali Dance at a local theatre. Overnight .



Cochin the queen of the Arabian Sea is one of the most interesting cities of India and has one of the finest natural harbors in the world. A root-conscious people of Kerala have preserved their past not only in the form of history books but also in the form of monuments and palaces. Places, palaces and institutions of historic value are being preserved conscientiously.

Day 02 – Cochin

After breakfast, drive to Poothotta village for a guided canoe cruise in narrow backwater canals followed by village experiences and a farm lunch. Afternoon for sightseeing of Cochin. This afternoon we will cover monuments like Jewish Synagogue, Dutch Palace, St Francis Church, Dhobi Ghat, Chinese Fishing nets, etc. Overnight at Hotel .



Village backwater Cruise - A journey in a country boat into the pristine purity of a typical village backwater of Kerala.... goes through the zigzagging narrow canals and paddy fields fringed with coconut palms.....watch rare birds....country boat making....a natural fish farm where you can go fishing.... You will witness coir making, toddy tapping before you end up your exclusive experience in our

Farm House for lunch -a delicious traditional Kerala dish under a tree.....While scrolling through this amazing village, you will watch the common life of the villagers for their livelihood. You will see them fishing in the river, the women do the coir making, a toddy tapper who does his job as a routine, men climbing the coconut trees to pluck the coconuts, later peeling the same to prepare to dry and make oil extraction possible. It's all about a life experience which you will cherish throughout your life.



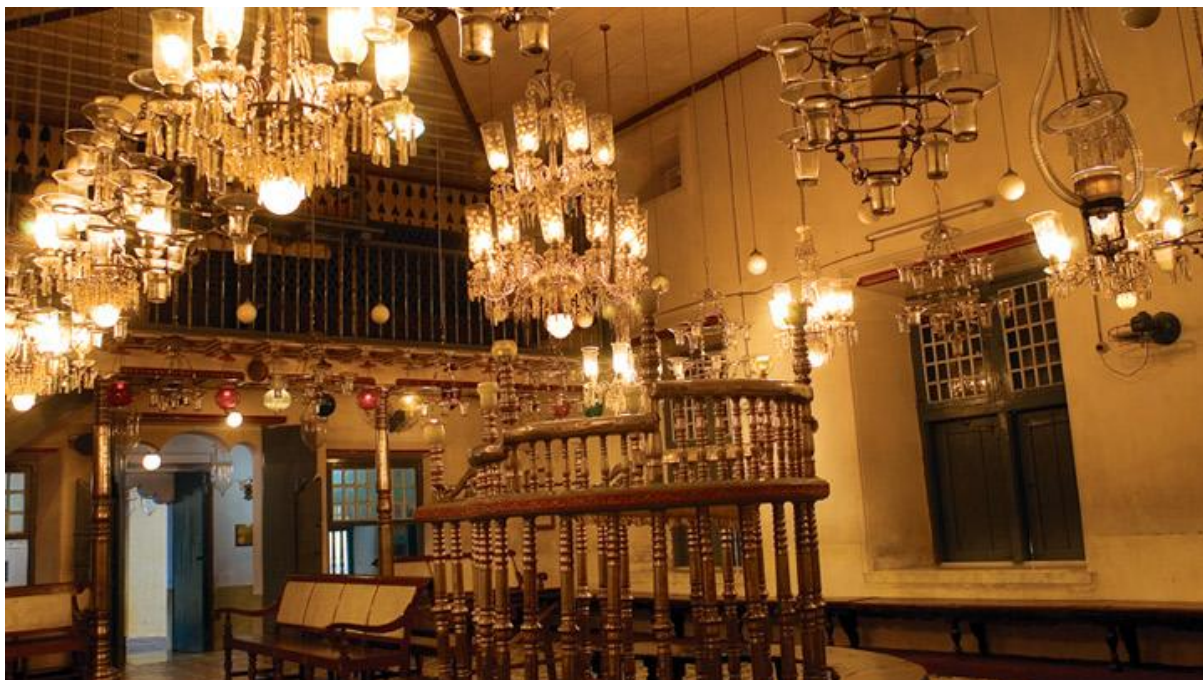


Cochin Sightseeing - *St Francis Church*, built in 1510 by friars brought to India by Vasco da Gama, is the first European church built in India and is the site where *Vasco da Gama* was buried. The *Jewish Synagogue* was built in 1568, Chinese hand-painted tiles are one of the attraction. This, the only Synagogue in India has a nostalgic past of a Jewish Diaspora. The "*Dutch Palace*" was built in the 1550s; the palace contains excellent mythological murals and a rare example of traditional Keralite flooring - a subtle mix of burnt coconut shells, lime, plant juices and egg whites - which gives the effect of polished marble.



Fort Cochin & Mattancherry are twin cities carry a flavor of the colonial era. Jewish, Arabs, Portuguese British all came to Cochin for trading and Mattancherry was the spice trade head quarters due to the proximity of Cochin Port. While Fort Cochin became the administrative head quarters, Mattancherry maintained its trading status. The colonial stature and buildings still make Fort Cochin a favourite destination for tourists. Its getting an upgrade once its declared as the first heritage city in India. Fort

Cochin was also a part of Muziris route. It will be interesting to know that around 13 religious communities are harmoniously living in Fort Cochin and Mattancherry. Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Jains, Sikhs etc are few among them.



Day 03 – Cochin

Full day at leisure to walk around Fort Cochin. You may opt to visit some specialty local restaurants, if you wish. Overnight at Hotel .

Day 04 -Cochin-Munnar (4 Hour Drive)

Morning, after breakfast, proceed to Munnar, known as nature lover's paradise . On arrival in Munnar ,check into your hotel. Rest of the day for free walks.Overnight at the Hotel.



Munnar ...breathtakingly beautiful - a haven of peace and tranquility - an idyllic tourist destination in God's own country with unending expanses of tea plantations... pristine valleys and mountains...exotic species of flora and fauna in its wild sanctuaries and forests...aroma of spice scented cool air. Munnar has all these and more.... It's the place you would love to visit... It's the place you would wish never to

leave. Set at an altitude of 6000 ft in Idukki district, situated at the confluence of three mountain streams, Munnar was the favored summer resort of the erstwhile British rulers in the colonial days. Sprawling tea plantations, picturesque towns, winding lanes, trekking and holiday facilities makes Munnar a holiday resort. Among the exotic flora found in the forests and grasslands here is the Neelakurinji a flower, which bathes the hills in blue once every twelve years. Munnar also has the highest peak in South India - Anamudi - which towers over 2695 M and is an ideal spot for campers who like trekking.

Day 05-Munnar

Full day to explore Munnar.Your guide will join you to take you for a half day trekking through a nice terrain.Afternoon for driving to Top Station.Evening you may buy garden fresh tea etc from the local market. Overnight at hotel.



Day 06-Munnar

Full day to explore the tea making process at a tea plantation. You will go through the full tea making process from tea leaf plucking until tea dust making. Lunch will be served in one of the estate bungalows. Overnight at hotel.



Day 07-Marayoor-Chinnar (2.5 Hour Drive One way)

After breakfast, you will be driven to Marayoor village for guided walks through the nice lively village, Sandalwood forest, tribal areas etc. You will watch sugarcane making units, farm lands, walk to the Mount of the Dead, a world famous Megalithic site with dolmens, dolmenoid and dolmenoid cists. etc. followed by a traditional lunch at the village. Later you will be driven to Chinnar Sanctuary area to check into your hotel for overnight stay.

Marayoor valley. Visit to a rock cut temple, ancient inscriptions etc. Walk to the Mount of the Dead, a world famous Megalithic site with dolmens, dolmenoid and dolmenoid cists. Visit to a traditional sugarcane farm and Jaggery (black sugar) manufacturing. Marayoor is famous for its Sandalwood Forest which is protected by the Forest Department.



Day 08- Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary

Early morning, go for a local walk around your resort. Later you will be taken to Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary for a guided trek through the wet evergreen forest to watch wildlife. Overnight at the Hotel.

As you go on the nature trail in Chinnar, you are bound to come across a fascinating plethora of bird and animal life. Chinnar Sanctuary is located in the eastern slope of Western ghats sharing its flora and fauna with Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary and Eravikulam National Park. Elephant, gaur, leopard, spotted deer, sambar, grizzled giant squirrel, hanuman langur, long eared fish owl etc. inhabit the Chinnar forests. The grizzled Giant squirrel is an endangered species



Day 09 –Chinnar-Kotagiri – 5 Hour Drive

After breakfast,drive through amazing villages to Kotagiri,a unique Tamilian village surrounded by tea gardens.Overnight stay at your small hotel.



Day 10 –Kotagiri-Ooty-Kotagiri -30 minutes drive

After breakfast,drive to Ooty to visit the market to buy homemade chocolates,unique Nilgiri Tea etc.Also visit Shinkows Chinese Restaurent which is known for authentic Chinese cuisine.Botanical garden is amother highlight.Overnight at the Hotel.

Ooty stands at 7,347 feet above sea level in the Nilgiri mountain range. The landscape is marked by rolling hills covered with dense vegetation, smaller hills and plateaus covered with tea gardens, and eucalyptus trees. Many portions of the hills are preserved as natural reserve forests.



Ooty is among the most sought out hill stations in the Western Ghats with an apt title "Queen of Hill Stations". Located well in the Western Ghats at a height of 2286 meters and it's the headquarters of Nilgiri District. Nilgiris is a complete region with its own self contained environment, culture, history and even pre history. The township was developed by John Sullivan in the early 19th Century as a holiday retreat for the colonial British Governors of former Madras. You may still witness the small Victorian cottages on the valleys and many

other colonial spots. Botanical garden established in 1847 still stands as a unique attraction in the midst of the city.

Day 11 - Kotagiri

Full day to explore the serenity of Kotagiri. You may opt for a drive through the tea plantations to visit a Toda tribe temple and villages enroute. Overnight at Hotel.



Day 12- Kotagiri-Coonor-Dindigul Cardamom House (4.5 Hour Drive)

After breakfast, check out and drive to Dindigul to have a unique homestay experience at Cardamom House. If time suits, you may try a toy train ride from Ooty to Coonor enroute. Overnight at Cardamom House.

Cardamom House overlooks the monsoon dependent Kamarajar Lake near Athoor. This family home stay nestles in the unbelievably beautiful foothills of the Western Ghats, close to Sembatti and Dindigul. It provides Western comforts in a rural setting. British physician, Dr. Chris Lucas established Cardamom House in 1996. Here, you can retreat into nature, away from the bustle and noise of Indian towns. Spend your days relaxing; swimming in the

flower-surrounded pool; reading; being creative with your camera, paints or pens; watching birds; or exploring the valley or further afield.

Day 13- Dindigul Cardamom House

Full day to relax or explore the region around. Overnight

Day 14 – Dindigul- Periyar (1.5 Hours drive)

After breakfast, drive to Periyar Sanctuary. Enroute stop at Harvest Fresh farms for a guided organic farm visit followed by a relaxing farm lunch. Later check into your resort in Periyar. Evening you may opt to watch a Martial Art Show Kalaripayattu at a theatre in Periyar. Overnight at Hotel.



Periyar - Conjures up images of elephants, chains of hill and spice scented plantations. Here, in the crisp, cool air of the Western Ghats you will see a lot of wildlife and observe the way of life of simple mountain people. Periyar Tiger Reserve is one of the finest wildlife reserves in India, and spread across the entire district are picturesque plantations and hill towns that hold great opportunities for treks and mountain walks.

Day 15 – Periyar (7.30 AM till 4.30 PM)

Full day trekking in the Sanctuary. It will be a guided program by the forest Department and there are chances of closure of the Sanctuary between April & June due to the fear of wild fire etc. At 0730 AM we have to report at the bus boarding point. Once you reach the starting point, you will finish the registration formalities and collect leech socks, packed light breakfast & a proper hot lunch etc. The program has around 12 kms of soft hike and 3 kms of bamboo rafting. This will be a nice program to watch possible wildlife in the sanctuary. Only physically fit travelers can do this full activity. Children below 13 years are not allowed to do the program. Evening return to the base to return to your hotel. Overnight at hotel.

This is one of Kerala's first Responsible Tourism Programs as a part of rehabilitating the tribal people who lived inside the Sanctuary and sometimes Poachers and hunters. With the help of an Eco Development Society (EDS), these people are now the guards of the forest for the best conservation and the best guides for tourists because they know the forest very well including the movement of wild animals. The revenue from these programs help the Government to give back to the Community to enable them to have decent living.



The Thekkady sanctuary is one of the best in the country for watching and photographing unique flora & fauna. A cruise through the waters of Periyar Lake around which the wildlife sanctuary is situated, offers lots of photo opportunities. This is the only sanctuary in India where you can have the unique experience of viewing wildlife at close quarters from the safety of a boat on the lake. The greatest attraction of Periyar remains the large herds of wild elephants that come down to the lake's edge. Tigers are sighted when the forest water holes dry up and these animals come and drink water from the river.



Evergreen and semi-evergreen forests constitute the major part of the Periyar Tiger Reserve. The rest of the area is a combination of moist deciduous forests and grasslands. Of the 27 tiger reserves in India, the Periyar Tiger Reserve is the oldest in the country and the largest in the State. The abundant wildlife here attracts a lot of visitors. Apart from being



a recognised breeding ground for tigers, the reserve has also been identified as the best place for researching elephantine life.

The tiger population in the area is estimated to be about 40. Though it is difficult to sight them, visitors often spot pugmarks and scats around the reserve. Thirty-five species of mammals have been identified here. They include rare and endangered species. A boat ride on the lake is a great way to spot the wild elephants, the Gaur, the Sambar and so on. While the Gaur is the largest of the bovines here, the Sambar, the largest deer in India, is the main prey of the tiger and the wild dog

Apart from these, there are wild pigs, Malabar Giant Squirrels, Small Travancore Flying Squirrels, jungle cats, sloth bears etc. The endangered species in the area include Nilgiri Langurs and the Lion-tailed Macaque, that is usually seen only in the evergreen interiors. Nilgiri Tahrs are also found in the reserve, especially in the higher rocky areas. Salim Ali's fruit bat, one of the rarest bats, is also reported to have been found in the area. The stripe-necked mongoose, usually found in the semi-evergreen and evergreen forests, the extremely rare Nilgiri Marten - the only species of marten found in southern India- and endemic mustelids are also seen here.



There are about 265 species of birds in the Periyar reserve including migrant birds. The birds include raptors, water birds, galliform birds, pigeons, wood peckers, darters, kingfishers, golden orioles, Brahmini kites, cormorants and passerines, as well as a large flock of the Great Pied Hornbill and the Ceylon Frogmouth. The endemic species include the Malabar Grey Hornbill, the Nilgiri Wood Pigeon, the Blue-winged Parakeet, the Nilgiri Flycatcher, the small Sunbird and the White-bellied Blue

Flycatcher. Other birds found in the area are the Black Baza, Forest Eagle Owl, Nilgiri Thrush, Little Spider Hunter, Rufous bellied hawk eagle etc. An interesting sight is that of water fowl perched on the dead trees protruding out onto the lake. Other aquatic birds include the Indian Darter and the Black-Necked Stork. Woodland birds, owls etc. can also be seen in the forest.

There are 1966 varieties of flowering plants, including angiosperms. Both dicots and monocots have been included in this count. There are about 171 grass species and 140 species of orchids in the region. The richness of the flower wealth is so outstanding that it constitutes more than 50 percent of the entire flower wealth of Kerala, which is about 3800 species. Teak, Rosewood, Terminalia, Eucalyptus, Sandalwood, Jacaranda, Mango, Jamun, Tamarind, Banyan, Pipal, Plumeria, Gulmohar and bamboo are some of the trees found here. The three main endemic plants are Mucuna pruriens thekkadiensis, Habenaria periyarensis



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and *Syzygium periyarensis*. Rare plants like the *Podocarpus wallichianus*, the only South Indian conifer, are also found in the reserve. More than 350 medicinal plants, including trees, shrubs and herbs, have been identified at the Periyar Tiger Reserve, mainly in the evergreen and moist deciduous forests. Plants belonging to the family of Fabaceae and Euphorbiaceae are the major ones among them. Glory Lily (*Gloriosa superba*) and Kino Tree (*Pterocarpus marsupium*) are two plants with medicinal value found here.



Day 16 – Periyar

After breakfast, go for a guided spice farm tour. Rest of the day at leisure at your resort. Overnight Stay .

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Day 17 – Alleppey Houseboat (4.5 Hour Drive)

After an early breakfast, drive to Alleppey to board your exclusive Houseboat for a cruise through the backwater villages. Your meals will be freshly cooked and served on board. Overnight on Houseboat.



What is truly magical about a houseboat is the breathtaking view of the untouched and otherwise inaccessible rural Kerala that it offers. The houseboats have all the creature comforts of a good hotel including furnished bedrooms, modern toilets, cozy living rooms, a kitchen where are cooked on board and supplemented with fresh fish from the backwaters. Today, the tradition is still continued and the food from the local cuisine is served by the Kuttanad locals, on board. The name Backwaters

brings you the very thought of Houseboats. Food and leisurely times spent on-board with the feeling and privacy of house as well as enjoying the natural beauty. A Cruise amidst marvelous mangrove forests, captivating coconut canopies, swaying palms, mangrove forests, pulsating paddy fields sprinkled with enchanting waterways and canals decked with white lilies, can be quite a rejuvenating experience for the weary traveler. Enjoying a cruise in these backwaters is not to be missed, as it leaves you feeling fully rejuvenated. The banks of these backwaters in Kerala are the most enchanting picnic spots. You get to experience the native way of living. The experience on the Houseboat is not the one to be explained by words. Its to be lived and evolved by yourself



Day 18 –Houseboat

Continue your relaxing cruise through the serene villages. Overnight on Houseboat.

Day 19– Alleppey –Heritage Home Cookery Show- Marari Fishermen Village(1 Hour drive)

After breakfast on board, check out and drive to a Heritage home nearby to participate in an interactive cookery show followed by lunch with the family. Later, checkout & drive to Marari, a relatively quiet beach paradise of Kerala. You may opt to visit Rest of the day at leisure at your resort on the beach. You may opt to go for an Ayurvedic Massage or a village walk through the nearby fishermen village. Overnight at the Resort.



Day 20 – Marari Fishermen Village-Story of life harmony

Full day at the resort. An authentic experience of Kerala's traditional fishing villages, and a re-creation of an ancient, harmonious way of life. By evening it may be interesting to visit the local temple to watch the local crowd coming for worship and socialisation. Overnight at Resort.

Day 21 –23 At Leisure on the Beach

Full day at the resort. Be on your own with Ayurveda, beach walks etc. Overnight at Resort.



Day 24– Cochin Departure (2.5 Hour Drive)

Today, you will be assisted and transferred to Cochin International airport for your flight home!!

Tour Price on request Contact:-

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