Mercury Holidays

KERALA EXPLORER

Kochi, Alleppey, Thrissur, Munnar, Thekkady & Trivandrum

Characterised by winding emerald rivers, exotic wildlife, spice plantations and lush landscapes, the south Indian state of Kerala exudes tranquillity and beauty. Explore the region on this 10 night, 12 day tour, discovering the most captivating areas including an overnight boat cruise on the rural backwaters, tea plantations in Munnar and wildlife spotting in Periyar National Park.

This document aims to give you all the information that you require for a smooth and comfortable trip to Kerala. Please take the time to read this dossier to familiarise yourself with all the aspects of our tour. It includes important details such as flight details, visa requirements and travel insurance.

Your included meal guide:
B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 1: UK to Kochi
Depart London on your overnight flight.

DAY 2: Kochi D
On arrival at Kochi International airport, you will be met by your guide and transferred to your hotel where you will check in and have dinner. The rest of your evening is at leisure.

DAY 3: Kochi B/L/D
Start your day with a 45 minute Ayuervedic massage and breakfast at your hotel. This afternoon enjoy a traditional lunch of Sadhya, a delicacy in Kerala served on a banana leaf, before you begin your tour of Kochi, the historic centre of India's spice trade. See the ancient Chinese influence in the impressive fishing nets, still used daily by locals, and take a ride through the village road in a tuk-tuk. You will also see the Mattanchery Dutch Palace and the oldest European church in India, St. Francis before returning to your hotel in Kochi for the evening.

DAY 4: Kochi (Cochin) **to Alleppey** B/L/D
Today you will board a traditional houseboat which will be your transport and accommodation. This leisurely cruise takes you through the winding backwaters of Kerala, enjoying the local food and stunning rural scenery of the surrounding Kerala villages and waters. Meandering through the beautiful lagoons, rivers and canals is truly an amazing experience like no other.

DAY 5: Alleppey to Thrissur B/L/D
After breakfast disembark and journey to the Athirapally Waterfalls which, falling from a height of 80 feet, are one of the highest in the state. Then head on to Thrissur with its strong cultural, religious and spiritual background. Visit historical buildings such as the Vadkumnathan and Paramekavu Devi Temples before exploring the Punnathur Kotta Elephant Sanctuary, where you can watch these magnificent creatures feed and bathe. Continue to your hotel in Thrissur where you will spend the next two nights.

DAY 6: Thrissur B/L/D
Following breakfast, today will be your chance to gain insight into the local culture with 'A Day with the Masters', an introduction to the world of Kerala's traditional performing arts. Learn about traditional Sanskrit theatre, percussion music and the training of each art form, as well as the life of an artist. Retire to your hotel in the evening for dinner and your overnight stay.

DAY 7: Thrissur to Munnar B/L/D
The tour will depart Thrissur in the morning and travel to Munnar, known for its expanse of tea plantations, rolling valleys and mountains. Stopping en route for lunch, the rest of the day will be free time where you may choose to hire a bicycle and ride through Munnar's beautiful paths, or simply relax with a good book at your hotel.

DAY 8: Munnar B/L/D
Today you will have a tour of Munnar, a nature lover's paradise. Visit Mattupetty Lake, Echo Point, Gundala Lake and Jungle Honey Bee Nest, where over 20 nests occupy a single tree. You will then continue to a tea plantation and Rajamalai National Park, famous for its largest surviving population of Nilgiri Tahr (wild goat).

DAY 9: Munnar to Thekkady B/L/D
The tour will then journey to Thekkady, a stunning area located high in the Cardamom hills containing tea gardens, rubber, coffee and pepper plantations. Following lunch, a visit to a plantation and spice market awaits you.

DAY 10: Thekkady to Trivandrum B/L/D
A highlight of Thekkady is the Periyar National Park, India's largest wildlife sanctuary. Board a boat at Periyar Lake where you will have the chance to spot some elephants, or one of the park's 25 Bengal tigers amongst other birds, reptiles and mammals. From here you will then travel on to Trivandrum, en route enjoy the scenic beauty of Kerala's various villages before arriving at your hotel for your overnight stay.

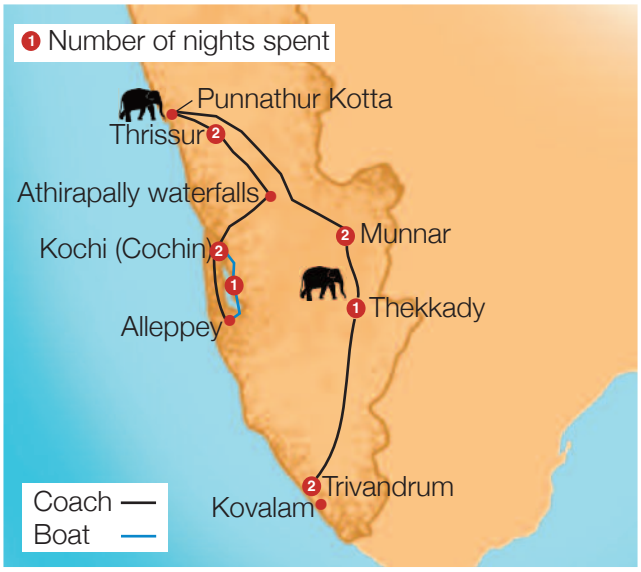
DAY 11: Trivandrum B/L/D
Depart in the morning for a half day city tour. Witness the magnificent Kanakakunnu Palace, one of the last architectural relics of the colonial era, then see the famous Sri Padmanabha Swami Temple, one of the principle places of worship of the deity of Vaishnavism. You will then return to your hotel to enjoy another Ayurvedic massage before your farewell dinner.

DAY 12: Trivandrum to the UK or Extension B
Transfer to the airport for your flight to the UK, or continue on to your chosen extension.

Hotel Information

Kochi (2 nights): 5★ Hotel Casino - Casino Building, Willingdon Island, Kochi.
Contact number: +91 484 301 1711
Alleppey Backwaters (1 night): Houseboat cruise
Thrissur (2 night): 3★ River Retreat - Palace Road, Cheruthuruthy, Thrissur.
Contact number: +91 488 426 2974
Munnar (2 nights): 4★ Tea County Resort - KTDC Hill Resort, Munnar.
Contact number: +91 486 523 0460
Thekkady (1 night): 4★ Aranya Nivas - Kumily Thekkady Road, Thekkady.
Contact number: +91 486 922 2023
Trivandrum (2 nights): 4★ Uday Suites - Watts Lane, Beach P.O Shangumugham, Trivandrum. Contact number: +91 471 250 4333

During your tour you will be staying in a range of 3★, 4★ and 5★ accommodation, all of which feature an en suite bathroom. Mercury Holidays has visited and inspected all of the hotels to ensure that they meet the high standards of service which we require for our clients. If the hotels detailed are not available alternatives will be used of a similar standard. Final confirmation of your hotels will be sent in a document approximately two weeks before you travel.



Meals

Breakfast will be served in the hotels and is generally local cuisine with western options available. Lunch and dinner will be taken in local Keralan restaurants. A variety of restaurants are visited giving you the chance to experience a range of dishes and flavours.

On your arrival

On your arrival in Cochin you will be met by a representative from our local agent, Jayasree, holding a sign displaying: "Mercury Holidays".
The Mercury Holidays/India Travel Service representative will show you to your transfer vehicle. Your guide will be able to answer any queries. However, if you need to contact Jayasree during your stay the details are:

Jayasree Travels and Tours
P.O Box 5236
Pettah
Thiruvananthapuram
Kerala
India

Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for Jayasree Travel and Tours

Contact	Telephone number
Mr Praveen Nair	0091 984 706 6802
Mr Jagdish Nair	0091 956 208 9699
Ms Samitha	0091 974 471 3380

Visas

A visa is required for entry into India. British Citizen Passport Holders will need to obtain an e-Tourist Visa (eTV) for travel to India. We work closely with The Travel Visa Company who will be able to arrange your visa on your behalf. Please call them on 01270 250 590 and quote "Mercury Holidays". The cost of the visa is approximately £72 per person. The Travel Visa Company can only apply for this 30 days before your proposed travel date and takes around 10 working days to issue. It is only valid for a 30 day single entry stay from the date of arrival. When calling the Travel Visa Company they will advise you of any changes to the fees or the procedure, they will also advise you of all information they will require in order to apply for the visa.

Insurance

You must obtain suitable travel insurance prior to departure. Mercury Holidays is partnered with Holiday Extras who offer insurance at the following prices, (worldwide, excluding USA).

Age in years	Up to 64	65-74	75-85
Up to 17 days cover	£42	£79	£135

For all persons 86 years and over, please contact us for insurance prices. Please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. Mercury Holidays will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Health and Vaccinations

We recommend that you consult your local GP for advice on vaccinations and travel health before your departure. You cannot drink the tap water.

Physical Accessibility

This tour is accessible to most people with an average level of fitness and normal mobility. It involves full days of sightseeing, often on foot, and includes some climbing of stairs and getting on and off coaches and boats. This tour is not suitable for anyone with walking difficulties.

Group Size

The minimum number of travellers in your group will be 10, and the maximum will be 35. If in the unlikely event there are less than 10 people booked on your tour date then you may be asked to change to a different date. A full refund will be made available to you should this alternative not be suitable.

Tour Guides

This is a fully escorted tour, meaning that you will be met on arrival by your national guide who will remain with you for the duration of your trip. You will also be joined by a local guide in each of the locations which you visit, ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

Tipping

Tipping is not compulsory and is at your discretion. Should you wish to tip, this will be collected by your guide at the end of your tour for your convenience. It is asked that if you do not tip in the local currency, please do not give coins as these are difficult to exchange.

Currency Exchange

The currency in Kerala is the Indian Rupee or Rs. The Rupee is a closed currency and officially you are not allowed to take any cash out of India. US Dollars and GBP are also widely accepted in India should you wish to keep an alternative currency.

Credit Card Information

As normal practice you will be asked for your credit card details on check-in at the hotel in order to cover any extras incurred during your stay. If you do not have a credit card you may be asked for a cash deposit. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in hotels.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money with you to cover any personal purchases, such as souvenirs, laundry, extra drinks and snacks. Approximately £100 - £200 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour.

What to Pack

- Sunscreen and hat in summer
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Warm clothing and thermals in winter
- Camera and charger
- Travel plug adapter - the electricity supply in Jordan is 230 V. You will need a 2 or 3 round pin plug adapter.
- Loo paper for public WCs
- Binoculars • Antibacterial hand gel

Itinerary Changes

The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your local guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Some road construction and/or weather conditions may lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

Flight and Airport Information

Your flight is to Trivandrum Airport with Jet Airways (9W), departing from London Heathrow Terminal 4.

Route	Depart	Arrive	Flight Duration	Flight Number
London Heathrow-Mumbai	21:05	11:25	8 hours 50 mins	9W117
Mumbai-Kochi	13:25	15:40	2 hours 15 mins	9W403
Trivandrum-Delhi*	06:05	10:35	4 hours 30 mins	9W2824
Delhi-London Heathrow	13:45	18:30	9 hours 15 mins	9W122

IMPORTANT: Please note that all flight times are subject to change. Final flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

Baggage Allowance

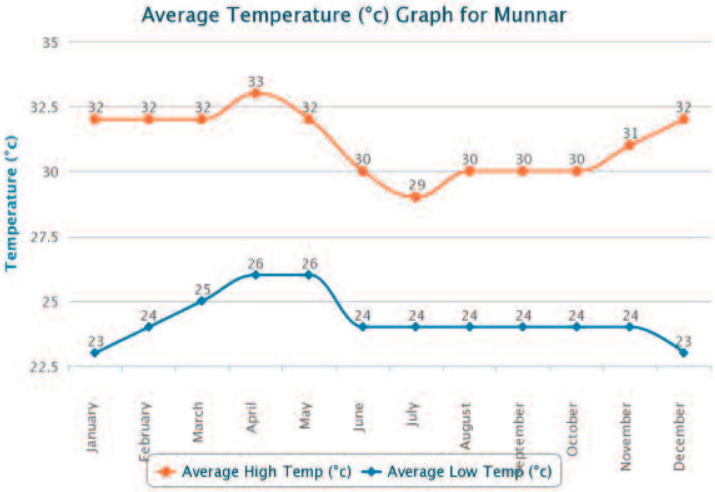
Baggage allowance (per person): Each passenger is entitled to 23kg of hold luggage plus 1 item of hand luggage not exceeding 55cm x 35cm x 25cm in size or 7kg in weight. Weight restrictions will be finalized on E-ticket receipt. Should you wish to take additional luggage you will need to pay extra at check – in. Check-In should be at least 3 hours before departure. *Please note that your flight from Trivandrum to Delhi will have a short touchdown in Bangalore Airport.

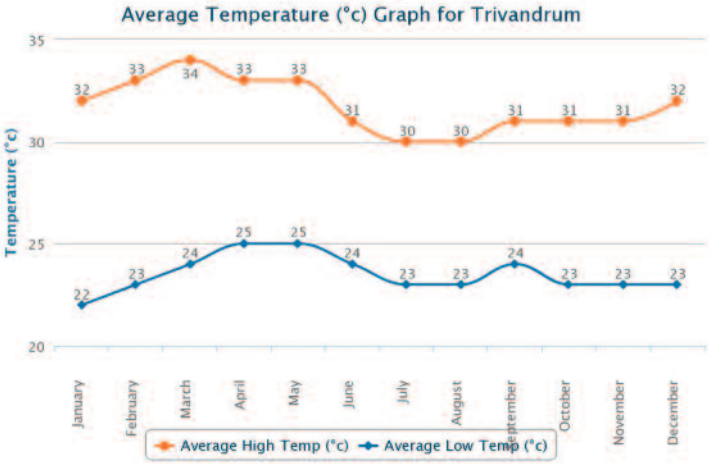
Airport Extras

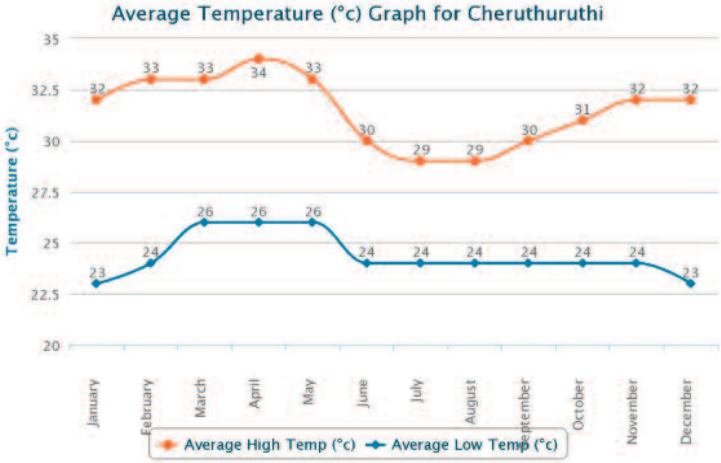
If you wish to arrange Airport car parking, lounges or accommodation at preferential rates, we recommend you book this in advance with Holiday Extras - Tel. 0871 360 2000, quoting HX313.

Weather and Climate

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.







Mercury Holidays

INDIAN COOKERY CLASS

Kovalam

Your 3 night cookery package extension with Dr. Lekshmi Nair, one of the most popular celebrity chefs in Kerala, provides the opportunity to learn about the typical cuisine of South India. You will also have the chance to make your own dishes and unwind at your beach-side hotel.

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your add-on to Trivandrum.

Your included meal guide:
B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 12: Trivandrum to Uday Samudra D
Transfer to the 5★ Uday Samudra Beach Hotel in Kovalam and enjoy a 3 hour cookery class.

DAY 13: Uday Samudra, Kovalam B/D
Enjoy another 3 hour cookery lesson whilst having the rest of the day at your leisure.

DAY 14: Uday Samudra, Kovalam B/D
Following the chance to perfect your culinary skills with further classes, you will have the rest of the day to relax within your beach front surroundings.

DAY 15: Uday Samudra, Kovalam to UK B
Depart after breakfast for your return flight to the UK. Flight details can be found below.

Hotels
Kerala, Kovalam (3 nights)
The 5★ Uday Samudra Beach Hotel overlooks the sea and only a short walk to Kovalam's popular beaches, this hotel provides excellent guest facilities including three swimming pools. Your Half Board hotel stay includes your breakfast and dinner daily. Address: GV Raja Road, Samudra Beach, Kovalam,
Contact: +91 471 248 1654

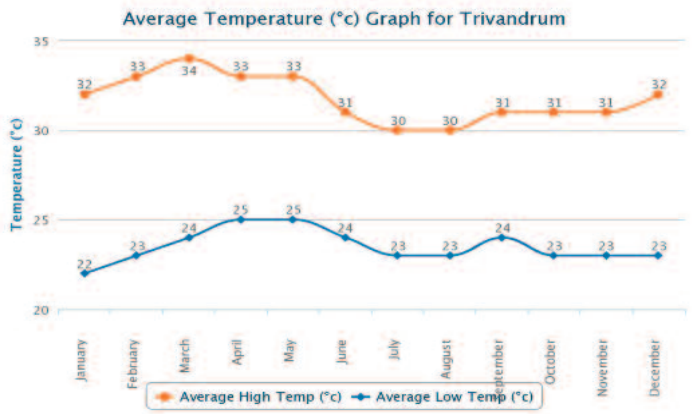
Tour Guides
You will be transfered to your hotel after the Kerala Explorer tour and will receive transfers to the airport at the end of your stay. Travel to the cooking centre is also included.

Currency Exchange
The currency in Kerala is the Indian Rupee or Rs. The Rupee is a closed currency and officially you are not allowed to take any cash out of India.

US Dollars and GBP are also widely accepted in India should you wish to keep an alternative currency.

Personal Expenses
You will need to take money with you to cover any personal purchases, such as souvenirs and laundry, as well as your lunch, snacks and drinks. Your Half Board hotel stay includes your breakfast and dinner daily.

Weather and Climate



Flight Information

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