

WONDERS OF SOUTH INDIA



TRIP OVERVIEW

The Hindu heartland of this fascinating subcontinent presents a dazzling array of experiences unique to the region; from colonial railways crossing bottomless gauges to priceless temple craftwork depicting spiritual legends, our in depth sixteen day itinerary immerses you within this mystifying province. Cruise the palm-fringed backwaters of Alleppey, marvel at royal splendour in Mysore Palace and catch a glimpse of Kabini's allusive Bengal tiger.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

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

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

Day 1: UK to Bangalore Depart London on your scheduled, overnight flight to Bangalore.

Day 2: Bangalore B/L/D. On arrival into Bangalore, you will be met by a local guide and transferred to your hotel. After settling in, discover the cosmopolitan hub of India's booming IT industry peppered with Victoria-era architecture on your afternoon tour of the city. Visit the atmospheric Bull Temple, home to an enormous granite monolith of Nandi the celestial bull, wander through Lalbagh Botanical Gardens to admire the world's most diverse plant species and marvel at Vidhan Soudha's colossal Neo-Dravidian architectural splendour. In the evening, sample delicious local delights at your welcome meal.

Day 3: Bangalore to Mysore B/L/D. Following breakfast, depart Bangalore for the 18th century fort town of Srirangapatnam, once the stronghold of ruler Tipu Sultan before his defeat by colonial forces. Cross the main bridge over the Cauvery River to discover intriguing monuments documenting South India's power struggles, including a striking marble church built by French missionaries. Later, proceed to your hotel in the ancient city of Mysore.

Day 4: Mysore B/L/D. Considered one of India's most flamboyant cities, Mysore boasts a glittering royal heritage, bustling marketplaces and a thriving centre for yoga expertise. Your full day tour takes you to the heart of the city and one of India's grandest royal abodes — the sprawling Mysore Palace. Discover the palace's painted glass ceiling with peacock motifs in the Marriage Pavilion, treasured royal paintings that line the Public Durbar Hall and a glistening Golden Howdah used to carry the Maharaja. Atop the nearby Chamundi hills, visit the Chamundi Temple famed for intricate carvings on its towering gopuram entrance and panoramic vistas over Mysore.

Day 5: Mysore to Kabini B/L/D. This morning travel to Kabini — wild wetlands that surround the Kabini River. The riverbanks boast a rich variety of wildlife, particularly in summer as the receding water presents luscious meadows on either side. Upon arrival, enjoy the remainder of today at leisure.

Day 6: Kabini B/L/D. Spend this morning exploring the surrounding jungle on a jeep safari. From peculiar beaked Malabar Pied Hornbills perched upon mammoth Rosewood trees, to Indian bison meandering across the road and the prized Bengal tiger pacing amongst evergreen bamboo, your safari route gives you the best chance to observe South India's most intriguing natural inhabitants. In the afternoon, spot the largest congregation of Asiatic elephants, a plethora of majestic water birds and marsh crocodiles stalking shallow waters during your river safari.

Day 7: Kabini B/L/D. Your final day in Kabini is free to spend at leisure.

Day 8: Kabini to Ooty B/L/D. After breakfast journey to the hill station of Ooty, one of three that occupy the UNESCO recognised biome of Nilgiri Hill. For the next two nights, your elevated position offers stunning views across the southern plains and tea gardens that hug the sloping terrain.

Day 9: Ooty B/L/D. Completed in 1899 by British colonial forces, the Nilgiri Mountain Railway transports passengers through a series of gauges, across lofty bridges and around hillsides blanketed by tea plantations. Having completed this extraordinary sightseeing route, head to the nearby Toda tribe for a humbling insight into indigenous life; witness a village of barrel-shaped bamboo huts occupied by residents adorning cotton shawls and learn how water buffalos are central to this fascinating way of life.

Day 10: Ooty to Madurai B/L/D. Depart Ooty for one of India's oldest cities, Madurai. As an important place of worship and commerce, it encapsulates the complex historical tapestry of South India. Later this evening, witness a night ceremony at Madurai's biggest temple; during this procession, behold the spectacle of Lord Shiva's bronze statue being carried to the Hindu God of Love's bedchamber, accompanied by religious prayer and atmospheric temple music.

Day 11: Madurai B/L/D. This morning, visit one of India's grandest temples, Meenakshi Amman Temple. This complex presents 33,000 sculptures, illustrating vivid Hindu tales amongst 12 gargantuan gopuram towers engraved with gods, goddesses and demons — all in staggering detail. The pinnacle of your visit and testimony to the region's architectural finesse lies within the 'Hall of a Thousand Pillars', a masterpiece of lifelike sculptures clinging to towering pillars within a vast gallery.

Day 12: Madurai to Munnar B/L/D. Following breakfast, cross into the Indian state of Kerala arriving in Munnar — a region famed for its rolling hillsides coated in emerald tea plantations. The rest of your day is at leisure.

Day 13: Munnar B/L/D. Today visit natural splendours of the region including the mirror-like waters of Mattupetty Lake, call out at Echo Point whilst listening patiently to the returning call from surrounding hills, discover the origins of your morning tea at a plantation and witness the unforgettable scene of the Jungle Honey Bee Nest — 25 hives occupying a single tree. Return to Munnar for a well-deserved rest.

Day 14: Munnar to Alleppey B/L/D. In the morning, travel from Munnar to Alleppey — a hub of Kerala's vast waterway network. Here you will board a traditional houseboat which will be your transport and accommodation for the night. Enjoy a leisurely cruise through winding backwaters and meander through picturesque lagoons to admire stunning rural scenery whilst observing quaint surrounding villages.

Day 15: Alleppey to Cochin B/L/D. Beckoning merchants and explorers for over 500 years, the port city of Cochin offers a dynamic cultural mixture of Portuguese houses, ancient mosques and crumbling remains of British colonialism, all overlooking the tropical Malabar Coast. Disembark this morning for a half-day sightseeing tour to visit the seemingly modest Mattancherry Palace, home to astonishing Hindu murals depicting Puranic legends. Continue to the edifice of St Francis Church, believed to be one of India's oldest churches and gaze at Cochin's promenade, lined with distinct spiderlike Chinese fishing nets. This evening, enjoy a farewell meal at your hotel.

Day 16: Cochin to UK or extension B. Depart your hotel after breakfast and transfer to the airport for your scheduled flight back to the UK, or continue onto your chosen extension.

ACCOMMODATION DETAILS & MAP

Hotel information

Bangalore (1 night): 4★ St Marks Hotel

4/1, St. Mark's Road, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560001, India
Contact number: 0091 80 4001 9000

Mysore (2 nights): 4★ Radisson Blue Plaza

1, MG Road, Mysuru, Karnataka 570010, India
Contact number: 0091 821 710 1234

Kabini (3 nights): 4★ Red Earth Resort

Badane Kuppe, Via Antheasante, Near Hosmalla, HD Kote Taluk, Mysuru, Karnataka 571114, India
Contact number: 0091 88847 33188

Ooty (2 nights): 4★ Gem Park Hotel

Sheddon Road, The Nilgiris District, Ooty, Tamil Nadu 643001, India
Contact number: 0091 423 244 1760

Madurai (2 nights): 5★ Heritage Resort

11 Melakkal Main Road, Kochadai, Madurai, 625 016, India
Contact number: 0091 452 2385455

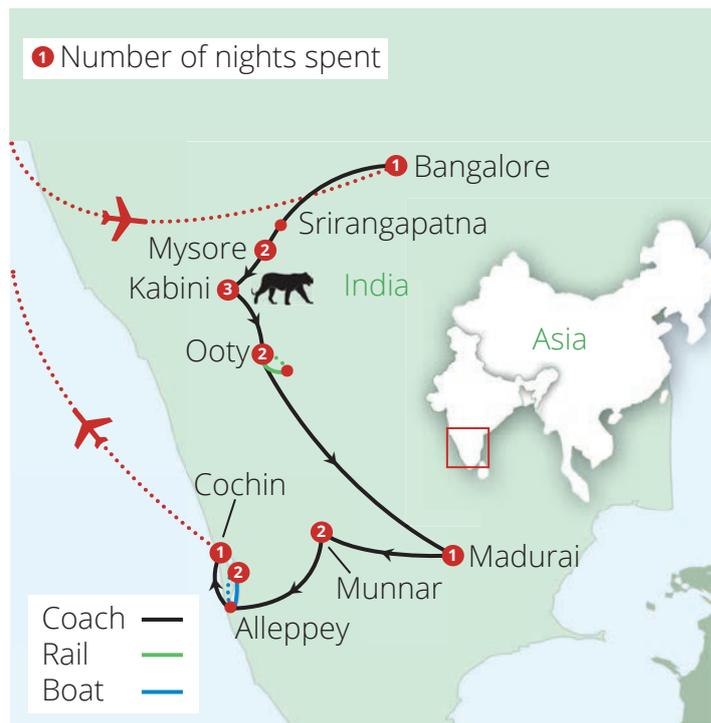
Munnar (2 nights): 4★ Tea County Resort

KTDC Hill Resort, Munnar, India
Contact number: 0091 486 523 0460

Alleppey Backwaters (1 night): Deluxe Houseboat cruise

Cochin (1 night): 5★ Hotel Casino

Casino Building, Willingdon Island, Kochi
Contact number: 0091 484 301 1711



Accommodation

All accommodation is 4★ or 5★ and features an en-suite bathroom, heating, air-conditioning, satellite TV and tea and coffee making facilities. 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. The hotels listed are a guide only and 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 10 days before you travel.

Meals

Breakfast is always western style and served in the hotel each morning. Lunch and dinner will either be always taken at local restaurants or at your hotel. 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 Bangalore you will be met by a representative from our local agent, Jayasree, holding a sign displaying: "Mercury Holidays". The Mercury Holidays/Jayasree 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

Kerala Office: P.O BOX 5236, Pettah, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India, Telephone Number: 0091 471 2743603

New Delhi Office: F 341-ground floor, Lado Sarai, New Delhi, India, 110030 Telephone Number: 0091 11 40565928 or 0091 1129521224

Emergency contact information

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

Ms Jayasree Vikraman: 00919747005888

Ms Samitha: 0091 974 471 3380

Mr Jagdish Nair: 0091 956 208 9699

Mr Anil Kumar: 0091 984 706 6802

Mrs Prashansa Alkesh: 0091 997 148 8995 (Delhi)

WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR TOUR

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. Alternatively you can visit The Indian Visa Application Centre in London: 142-148 Goswell Road, London, EC1B 7DU.

Insurance

You must obtain suitable travel insurance prior to departure. Mercury Holidays is partnered with Holiday Extras which offer insurance at the following prices. For all persons 86 years and over, please contact us for insurance prices. If you have an existing policy with another company 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.

(Worldwide excluding the USA)

Age in years	Up to 17 days	Up to 24 days
18-30 years	£27	£30
31-50 years	£31	£34
51-60 years	£33	£36
61-64 years	£42	£48
65-69 years	£69	£82
70-74 years	£79	£94
75-85 years	£135	£146

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 cities 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.

Health and Vaccinations

It is strongly recommended that you check the latest health recommendations for travel to India with your GP at least 4-6 weeks before travel. Any medicines you may need during your journey should be packed in your hand luggage. We suggest it is worth taking a few first aid supplies such as travel pills, rehydration powder, plasters, stomach settlers, mosquito repellent, antiseptic cream, aspirin etc, because these products can be more expensive abroad and familiar brands are not always available. It is not advisable to 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.

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.

Currency Exchange

The currency in India is the 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 on you.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money with you to cover any personal purchases, such as souvenirs, laundry and extra drinks and snacks. Approximately £400 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour.

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.

WHAT TO PACK

- Sunglasses, sunscreen and hat in summer
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Warm clothing and thermals in winter
- Camera and charger/spare batteries
- An electric plug converter
- Loo paper for public WCs
- Binoculars
- Mosquito Repellent
- Personal toiletries and first aid kit
- Anti-bacterial hand gel
- Long sleeve shirt and long trousers
- Swimwear

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Your initial flight is to **Bangalore Kempegowda International Airport** via Mumbai with **Jet Airways**, departing from **London Heathrow Terminal 4**.

Route	Depart	Arrive	Flight Duration	Flight Number
November - March				
Heathrow - Mumbai	21:05	11:25	8 hours 50 minutes	9W117
Mumbai - Bangalore	13:35	15:10	1 hour 35 minutes	9W394
Cochin - Mumbai	09:05	11:10	2 hours 5 minutes	9W406
Mumbai - Heathrow	12:55	17:55	9 hours 30 minutes	9W118
April - October				
Heathrow - Delhi	20:45	09:45	8 hours 30 minutes	9W121
Delhi - Bangalore	11:45	14:30	2 hours 45 minutes	9W815
Cochin - Mumbai	09:05	11:10	2 hours 5 minutes	9W406
Mumbai - Heathrow	12:55	17:55	9 hours 30 minutes	9W118

IMPORTANT: Please note that all flight times and numbers listed above are provided for guidance only and 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.

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.

Baggage Allowance

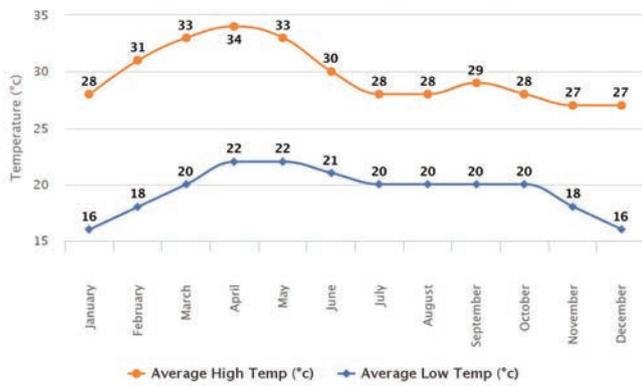
Each passenger is entitled to 23kg of hold luggage, however weight restrictions will be finalised on your e-ticket receipt. Should you wish to take additional luggage you will need to pay extra at check-in. Check-in should be at least three

hours before departure. Checked baggage allowance may vary. Please refer to the bottom right of your E-ticket receipt for the correct baggage allowance. For example, if it shows "20k" this means your allowance is 20kg; or "1PC" means One Piece not exceeding 23Kg. For handling purposes the maximum weight of any single piece of baggage must not exceed 32 Kgs. Hand Luggage: One piece of hand luggage with maximum total dimensions not exceeding a total of 115cm in size and 7kg in weight. Please refer to the Airline's website for further details and the most up-to-date information.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

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

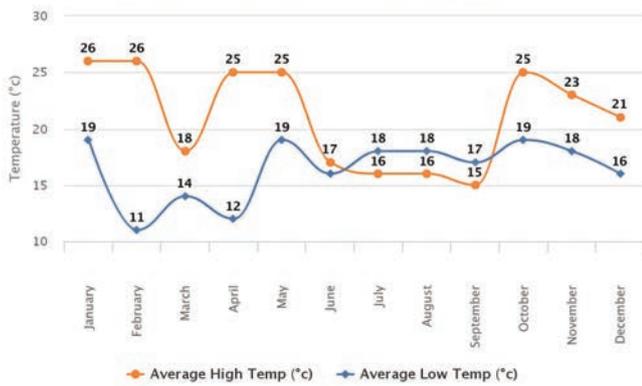
Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Bangalore



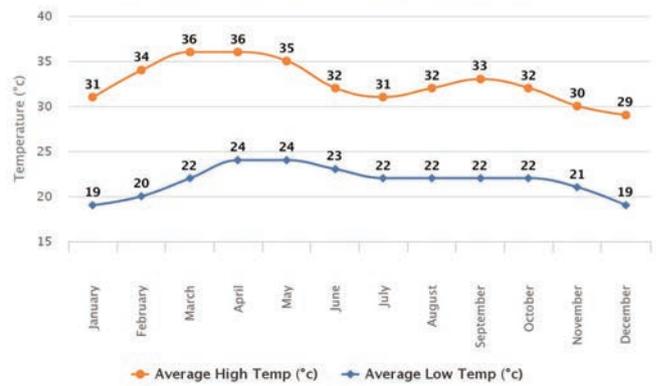
Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Madurai



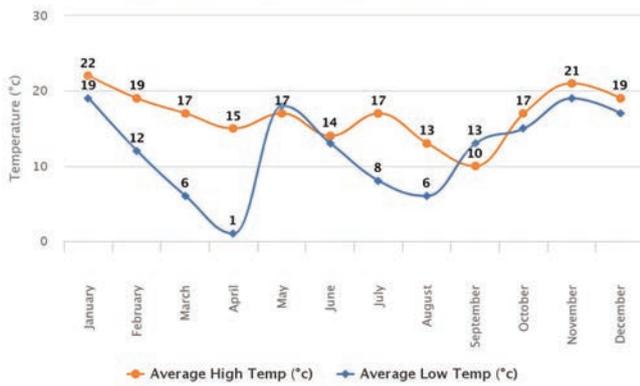
Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Mysore



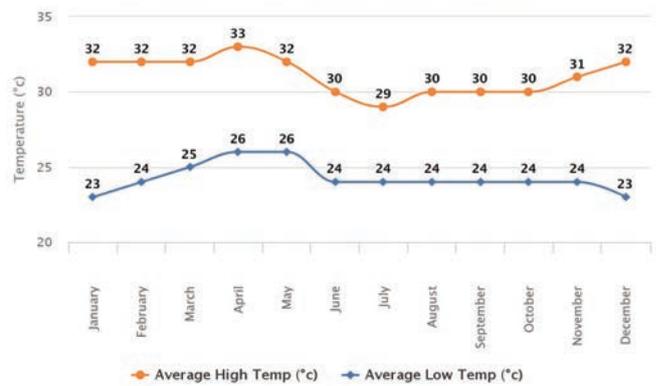
Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Munnar



Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Ooty



Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Alleppey



Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Cochin

