

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, via Dubai.

Day 2: Bangalore 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 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 8: 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.

Day 9: 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 10: 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 11: 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 12: 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.

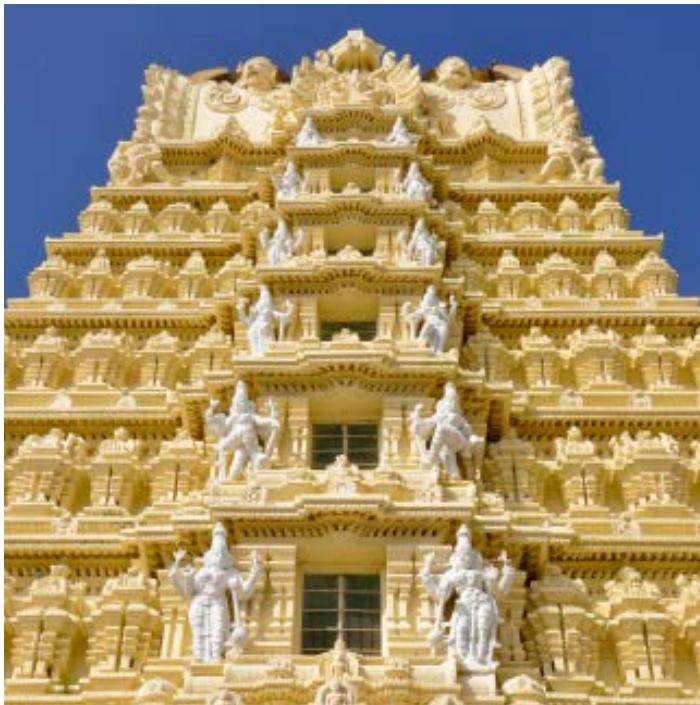
Day 13: Munnar to Alleppey B/L/D. In the morning, travel from Munnar to Alleppy — a hub of Kerala's vast waterway network. Here you will board a traditional houseboat which will be your transport and accommodation for the night. Enjoy a leisurely cruise through winding backwaters and meander through picturesque lagoons to admire stunning rural scenery whilst observing quaint surrounding villages.

Day 14: 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 15: Cochin B/L/D. Enjoy a full day at leisure in Cochin and in the early evening head to a Kathakali cultural show and watch a traditionally based dance based on themes of Hindu mythology.

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, via Dubai, or continue onto your chosen extension.

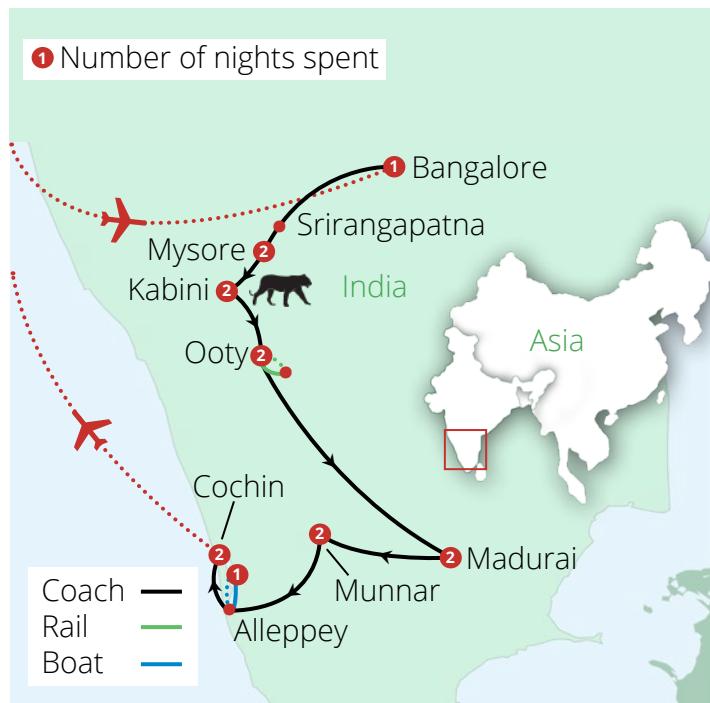
ACCOMMODATION DETAILS & MAP



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.

Please note: final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, 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.

Alcoholic drinks

Please note that Kerala has strict laws regarding the governance of the sale of alcohol in public places including hotels and restaurants. The sale and consumption of alcohol is therefore often restricted in hotels, varying from one establishment to another. You may however bring your own alcohol with you for private consumption in your room.

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
Contact number: 0091 471 2505067

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**

Contact	Telephone number
Ms Jayasree Vikraman	0091 974 700 5888
Ms Samitha	0091 974 471 3380
Mr Biju Unnikrishnan	0091 952 618 8860
Mr Harish Kumar	0091 952 618 8859
Mrs Prashansa Alkesh	0091 997 148 8995/0091 9958988772

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 £134 per person. The Travel Visa Company can only apply for this 120 days before your proposed travel date and takes around 10 working days to issue. It is only valid for a 60 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

We strongly recommend that you and all members of your party are suitably insured as soon as you book your holiday. It is a condition of booking that you must have suitable travel insurance. It is important that you purchase travel insurance that suitably covers your participation in whatever activities you may undertake at the time that you make your booking. To assist you with this, we have arranged travel insurance in partnership with Holiday Extras.

To arrange your travel insurance with Holiday Extras, please call **0800 781 4237** and quote '**WK830**' for preferential rates. 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.

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

It is customary to tip your guide and driver. This is at your discretion but we recommend you allow approximately £3 per person per day. It is asked that you tip in pounds and not 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, we will endeavour to reduce any disruption to your holiday and try to operate your tour with lower passenger numbers. If we are not able to operate your departure date then you may be asked to change to a different date and 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.

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 Dubai with Emirates (EK), departing from London Heathrow Terminal 3.

IMPORTANT: Please note that 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 30kg of hold luggage plus 1 item of hand luggage not exceeding 55cm x 38cm x 20cm in size or 10kg 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.

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. There are restrictions on taking Indian rupees into India. Visitors, including tourists, are not permitted to take any amount of Indian currency into the country. You can take cash or travellers' cheques (in pounds sterling or another foreign currency) and/or a bank card with you and exchange or withdraw rupees once in India.

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.

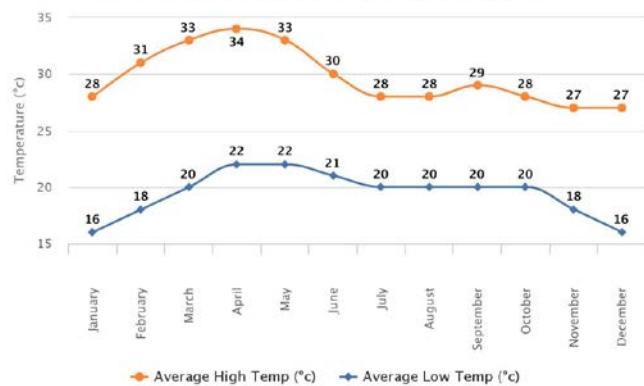
**Airport Extras**

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

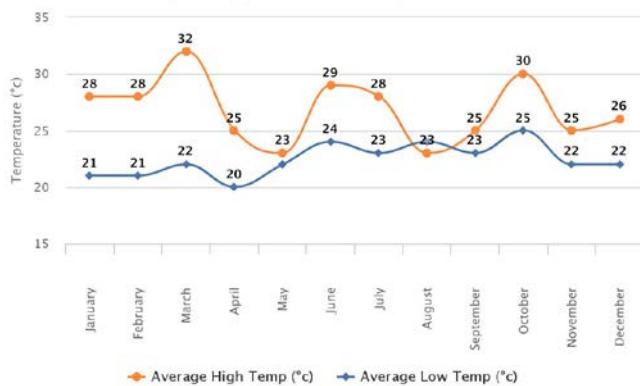
WEATHER AND CLIMATE

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

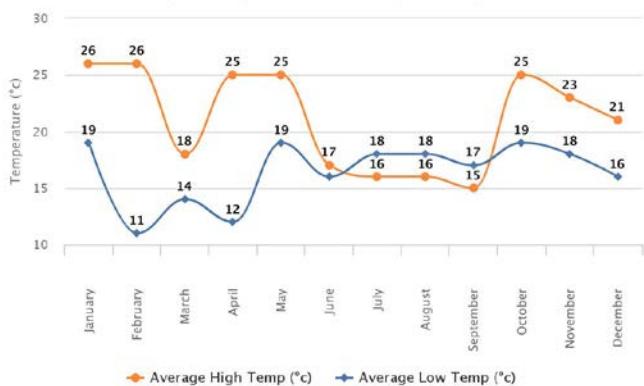
Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Bangalore



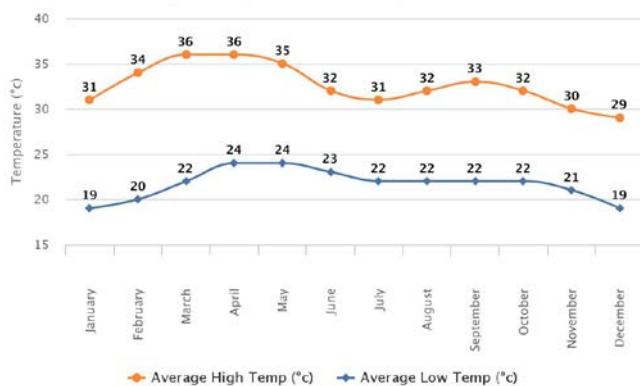
Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Madurai



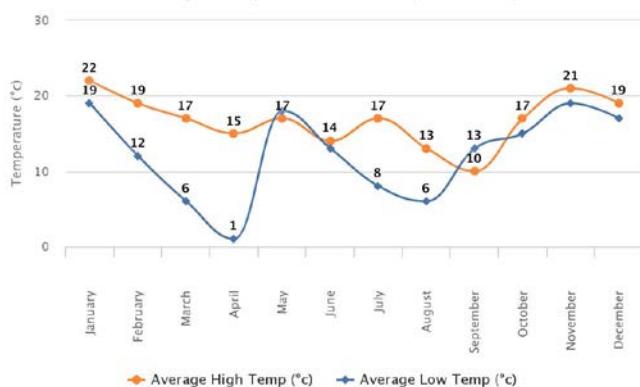
Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Mysore



Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Munnar



Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Ooty



Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Alleppey



Average Temperature (°c) Graph for Cochin



MARARI BEACH STAY

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so, please contact 0843 224 0723



TRIP OVERVIEW

Nestled beside the quaint fishing village of Mararikulam, discover the untouched sandy-beaches of Marari on your three-night extension within a truly tropical retreat. Whether lounging upon the beach soaking up the year-round sunshine, swimming within the Arabian Sea's glistening waters or enjoying a traditional Ayurveda massage at your hotel, the Marari extension is the ideal way to conclude your tour.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your extension to Marari.

Hotel

Your stay will take place at the 3★ plus Abad Turtle Beach on Full Board. Overlooking the quiet shores of Marari beach, the Abad Turtle Beach provides guests with a sublime tropical retreat with modern and traditional amenities. Stretching across a verdant area, each villa boasts air-conditioning, an en suite bathroom, TV, tea/coffee making facilities and a safe. For those looking to unwind, the massage service offers utter relaxation, alongside a myriad of other leisure and recreation facilities.

Hotel information

Varankavala, Pollathai P.O, Mararikulam, Alleppey 688567, Kerala
Contact number: 0091 478 2860965

Any alternative hotels or board basis will have been confirmed at booking. Please speak to our reservations department if you are unsure.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover personal purchases, laundry service, souvenirs, plus any items not included in your Full Board package.

Tour Guides

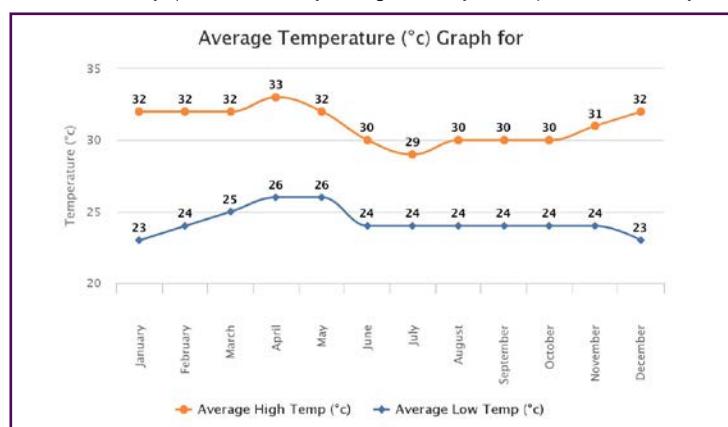
Your stay in Marari is not escorted by a tour guide. All internal transfers are included.

Please note

This extension takes place after your main tour.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

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



Abad Turtle Beach

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

For any further enquiries or for more information call us on **0843 224 0723**

DUBAI CITY STAY EXTENSION

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0843 224 0723



TRIP OVERVIEW

An extension to Dubai and its Emirates is the perfect place to relax and soak in the Arabian sun which shines out of a clear blue sky day after day. The United Arab Emirates offer a kaleidoscope of attractions from bustling city centres to rugged mountains and idyllic beaches.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your extension in Dubai.

Hotel (2 nights)

Your stay in Dubai will take place at one of the following hotels:

4★ Marco Polo on Bed & Breakfast.

Centrally located in the leisure district of Deira, the Marco Polo offers a great range of guest facilities including a roof top pool, plus an excellent selection of restaurants featuring several speciality eateries. The hotel is provides a free shuttle service also operates to one of Dubai's beaches.

Hotel Information

Address: Al Mateena St, Al Muteena, Deira, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Contact number: 00971 4 272 0000

5★ Carlton Palace Hotel on Bed & Breakfast.

The luxurious Carlton Palace Hotel is situated upon the exclusive Al Maktoum Street, within the heart of Dubai's business district. The cities best-known and most extravagant shopping malls are in walking distance along the busy waters of Dubai Creek; great nearby transport links will also open up a wealth of opportunities to further explore your surroundings.

Hotel Information

Address: Al Maktoum Rd Deira, Dubai 56262 United Arab Emirates
Contact number: 00971 4 227 0000

Any alternative hotels or board basis will have been confirmed at booking.
Please speak to our reservations department if you are unsure.

Please note: the hotels listed are provided for guidance only and final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Visas

All UK passport holders do not require a visa.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money with you to cover any personal purchases such as souvenirs and laundry plus any meals and drinks that are not included.

Tour Guides

Your stay in Dubai is not escorted by a tour guide. All internal transfers are included.

Currency

The currency in Dubai is the UAE Dirham.

Festivals

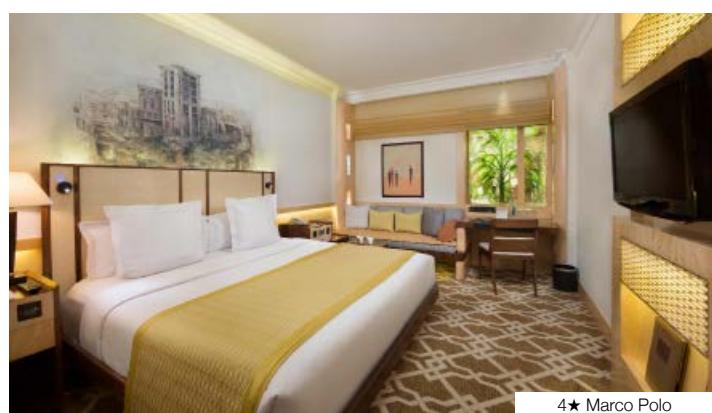
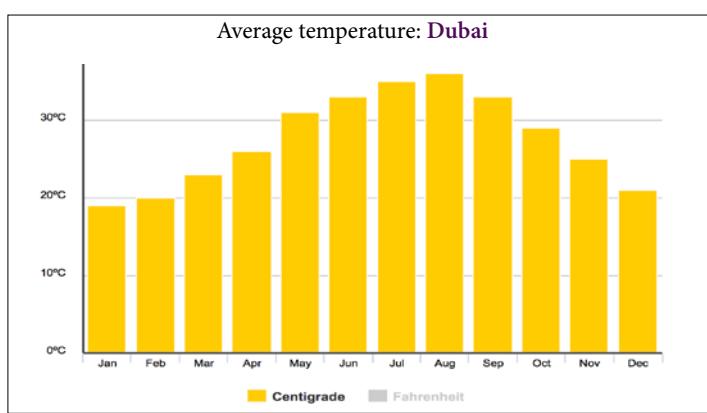
Ramadan will fall for a 1 month period sometime in May/June. Please be advised that restaurants, bars and facilities may close during this period. Please ask Reservations for details.

Tourist tax

The Emirates of Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah have introduced a compulsory tourist tax on all hotel accommodation, to be paid by guests at the hotel before departure. Please ask Reservations for details.

Please note

This extension takes place after your main tour.



4★ Marco Polo

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

For any further enquiries or for more information call us on **0843 224 0723**