

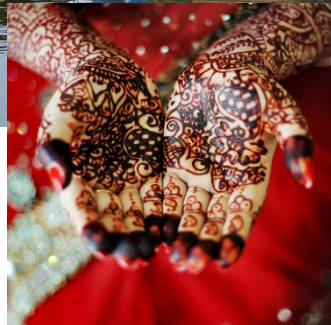


# Southern Indian Odyssey

1<sup>st</sup> November 2024



15 Day Fully Hosted Tour from New Zealand



## Southern Indian Odyssey – 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> November 2024

### FRI 1 New Zealand to Chennai

Today we meet our fellow travellers prior to our onwards flight to Chennai with meals on flight.

On arrival at Chennai we will be met and transferred to our hotel.

*Chennai, on the Bay of Bengal in eastern India, is the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu. The city is home to Fort St. George, built in 1644 showcasing the city's roots as a British military garrison and East India Company trading outpost, when it was called Madras. Religious sites include Kapaleeshwarar Temple.*

### SAT 2 Chennai

(B) (D)

This morning after breakfast, our private guide will meet us in the hotel lobby, they will explain the traditions of the local culture and our city tour will begin. Witness the history of colonial Madras involving the British East India Company and explore the architectural diversity of traditional 'Dravidian' styles with European influences.

Starting with a heritage walk at India's first British fortress - Fort St. George built in 17<sup>th</sup> century and pristine headquarters of state government. We will see inside the oldest surviving English church of India - St Mary's Church famed as the wedding venue for Clive of India. We then go on to capture the real life of Madras in the bustling bazaars of George Town and admire the 7<sup>th</sup> century Kapaleeshwarar Temple built by 'Pallava Dynasty'.

At sunset we visit Chennai's Marina Beach to interact with locals perhaps playing cricket and selling the catch of the day. Time here to explore fine Indo-saracenic buildings at the beachside including San Thome Basilica built by Portuguese explorers in 1520.

After our tour we will transfer back to our hotel, and this evening dine together at our Welcome Dinner.

### SUN 3 Chennai – Mahaballipuram – Pondicherry

(B) (L) (D)

After breakfast and checking out, we will be driven to the French city of Pondicherry. Enroute we visit the Shore Temples of Mahaballipuram and stop off along the way for lunch. This evening we enjoy the fun and laughter of an Indo French Cooking Class together, followed by dinner.

### MON 4 Pondicherry

(B) (D)

*Pondicherry (or Puducherry), was a French colonial settlement in India until 1954 and is now a Union Territory town bounded by the south-eastern Tamil Nadu state. Its French legacy is preserved in its French Quarter, with tree-lined streets, mustard-coloured colonial villas and chic boutiques. A seaside promenade runs along the Bay of Bengal and passes several statues, including a 4m-high Gandhi Memorial.*

Following breakfast, we will commence our city tour. The Indo-French city of Pondicherry is the 'Cote d'Azur' of India. Influenced by 1674s French East India Company, we explore an existing French colony with a unique heritage, architecture and lifestyle. Enjoy walking in the colonial streets of old Pondicherry and discover the Indo-French heritage evident all around, from mustard-coloured houses, chic shops to quaint boulevards. Witness the Green Muslim Quarter and Ville Noir which also known as the Tamil and French living Quarters.

Later we visit Auroville, an experimental community founded in 1968 by the spiritual leader Mirra Alfassa, as a town where people from all over the world could live in harmony. The philosophy of Auroville is based on the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, a poet, philosopher, visionary and guru, who left his body in 1950. Later we experience a Meditation Class at an Ashram before return to our hotel for dinner.

Meals included.

(B) Breakfast (L) Lunch (D) Dinner

## Trip Highlights

- ◇ CHENNAI – City Tour of Chennai
- ◇ CHENNAI - Fort St. George
- ◇ CHENNAI - Kapaleeshwarar Temple built by 'Pallava Dynasty'
- ◇ CHENNAI - Visit the bustling bazaars of George Town.
- ◇ CHENNAI - Visit the Shore Temples of Mahaballipuram
- ◇ PONDICHERRY - Enjoy an Indo French Cooking Class
- ◇ PONDICHERRY – Tour of the Indo-French city of Pondicherry
- ◇ PONDICHERRY - Enjoy a Meditation Class at an Ashram
- ◇ KUMBAKONAM - UNESCO World Heritage site of the Chola Temples
- ◇ THANJAVUR – Visit Maratha Palace
- ◇ TRICHY - Visit the Rock Fort Temple
- ◇ MADURAI - Attend a Pooja ceremony at Meenakshi Temple
- ◇ MADURAI - Tour of the medieval city of Madurai
- ◇ MADURAI - Tirumalai Nayak Palace
- ◇ MUNNAR - Visit the iconic Tata Tea Factory & Museum
- ◇ MUNNAR - Eravikulam National Park of Kerala
- ◇ PERIYAR - Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary
- ◇ ALLEPPEY - Board a traditional Kerala Backwater Cruise
- ◇ COCHIN - Sightseeing and heritage tour
- ◇ COCHIN - Visit a south Indian family home for an ethnic Anglo-Indian Cooking Masterclass

## Southern Indian Odyssey

Join us over 15 fabulous days.

Chennai, located on the Bay of Bengal in eastern India and the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu. The city is home to Fort St. George, built in 1644 showcasing the city's roots as a British military garrison and East India Company trading outpost, when it was called Madras and is a perfect start point for our tour as we discover enchanting Southern India and it's melting pot of rich cultures, colours, cuisines, traditions, wildlife sanctuary's, tea and spice plantations, palm lined canals and sandy beaches.

Travelling from Chennai in the east to Cochin in the west, we visit the bustling bazaars of George Town, the Temples of Mahaballipuram, learn to cook Indo-French Style all before taking time out for an afternoon to experience meditation at a local ashram. We journey on to visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of Chola Temples and attend a Pooja ceremony at the Meenakshi Temple. We spend time in the Misty Hills of the beautiful tea plantations including a visit to the iconic Tata Tea Factory. Our tour would not be complete without a visit to the infamous Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, regarded as one of the best National Parks in India and if we are lucky, we may spot that elusive Tiger.

All this before heading onwards to Alleppey, where step back in time and board our wonderful 'Kettuvallam' these days converted into a luxury houseboat, to cruise the canals of Kerala before our final stop in Cochin, located by the Arabian Sea for over 600 years, serene Cochin has been drawing traders, explorers and travellers to its shores that formed the first European colonies of colonial India and resulted in a mix of Portuguese, Dutch, and British villages that blended into the tropical Malabar Coast.

Nowhere else in India could we find such an intriguing mix: giant fishing nets from China, a 400-year-old synagogue, traditional art-crafts scene complimented with traditional live dances called Kathakali and crumbling remains of the British Raj and is a wonderful place of discovery.

### TUE 5 Pondicherry – Kumbakonam - Thanjavur (B)(L)(D)

After breakfast this morning we continue our journey as we head to towards Thanjavur (Tanjore), along the way stopping to visit the historic and UNESCO World Heritage site of the Chola Temples at Kumbakonam.

Upon arrival in Tanjore we tour the Dravidian style tall Brihadeeswara Temple followed by a visit to Maratha Palace. We also enjoy a special Tanjore 22 carat gold painting tour. Following our afternoon out and about, we head back to relax and dine at our hotel this evening.

### WED 6 Thanjavur – Trichy – Madurai (B)(L)(D)

Following breakfast, we journey to the temple city Madurai. Enroute we visit the Rock Fort Temple in Trichy and here is where we enjoy lunch. On arrival at our hotel, we check-in with time for a refresh and rest before our adventure this later this afternoon.

This evening we head out for a Pooja ceremony at Meenakshi temple & participate in a Sacred Aarti ceremony. This magnificent temple stands over 170ft tall and was nominated for the 'New 7 Wonders of World'. Later, we will return to the for dinner.

*Madurai is an ancient city located on the banks of 'River Vaigai', Madurai is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world that majorly traded with ancient Rome. Chennai may be the capital of Tamil Nadu, INDIA but Madurai claims its soul! Madurai is energetic, having a skyline dominated with 14 colourful gateway towers of its infamous Meenakshi Temple covered in intricate Dravidian Style paintings and carvings of mythical creatures and Hindu Gods & Goddesses.*

### THU 7 Madurai (B)(D)

We commence today with a city tour of Madurai. The medieval city of Madurai is located on 'Vaigai River' and it is here we see 17th century Tirumalai Nayak Palace built by the 'Nayaka Dynasty' that ruled Madurai, showcasing indigenous to Islamic architecture with the masterpiece of giant pillars - we explore this hidden masterpiece, which is an abode of the triple-breasted Hindu goddess 'Meenakshi'. Later we will take time to explore the local market before returning to our hotel.

The rest of the day is yours to explore before we regather for dinner together again tonight.

### FRI 8 Madurai – Munnar (B)(L)(D)

After enjoying breakfast head onwards to the mountain and tea-growing region on Munnar, stopping for lunch along the way.

After arrival at our hotel, the day is then free for rest, relaxation with dinner together tonight at the hotel.

*Munnar Hill Station situated in the Western Ghats range of mountains and 5000 feet above sea level. Munnar is home to South India's largest tea-growing region and carpeted in emerald-green tea plantation hills. Being located in the scenic western-ghat mountain ranges offers we low mountain scenery where we're often up above the clouds watching veils of mist clinging to the mountaintops.*



### SAT 9 Munnar (B)(L)(D)

Located high in the Cardamom Hills, Munnar was developed to cultivate spices and varieties of tea plants during the British Raj Era. The entire area is covered with thick forests and neatly groomed tea estates. There are planter's bungalows and grand old churches from the Raj era in Munnar. This morning after breakfast we take a tea trail to the family owned tea plantations in the region, here we visit the iconic Tata Tea Factory & Museum. Enjoy tasting the various spices, herbs to teas that are grown in the area, the fragrance is in the air! Some of the main spices cultivated here are ginger, garlic, cardamom, vanilla, pepper, cinnamon, coffee, tea, clove and nutmeg. Next, we take a soft trek inside the infamous Eravikulam National Park of Kerala, amongst other rare flora and fauna found here, encounter the Nilgiri Tahrs a species of mountain goats exclusive to the region. Exotic bird sighting are also popular in this region. Following our day out we have time back at our hotel to enjoy the sunset views, before dinner is served this evening.

### SUN 10 Munnar – Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary (B)(L)(D)

Once we have had breakfast & checked out, we journey on to the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary with lunch included along the way.

On arrival we check-in to our eco-friendly retreat, resembling a traditional village using thatched built from elephant grass.

Late in the afternoon, our tribal naturalist will accompany us on a shared boat-ride inside the infamous Periyar National Park to view some of the rare flora and fauna of South India.

*South India's most popular wildlife sanctuary, Periyar, also called Thekkady, encompasses 777 sq km and a 26- sq-km artificial lake created by the British in 1895. The vast region is home to bison, sambar, wild boar, langur, 900 to 1000 elephants and 35 to 40 hard-to-spot tigers. It's firmly established on both the Indian and foreigner tourist trails and has a typical boat cruise that doesn't scream 'wildlife experience', but if we dig deeper and do a trek led by a tribal villager, the hills and jungle scenery make for a rewarding visit!*

Tonight, dinner is at our hotel.

### MON 11 Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary – Alleppey (B)(L)(D)

Early this morning we enjoy bamboo rafting on Periyar Lake to spot some of the wildlife. A little later, we journey onwards to Alleppey Jetty Point - the Venice of the East and it is here we board our traditional Kerala Backwater Overnight Cruise on these converted rice barges called 'Kettuvallam' at over 100 feet long and built of coconut fibres.

We take time to relax and enjoy the journey at a leisurely pace as we cruise through the scenic backwaters of Southern India made up of fine lakes & lagoons, floating villages, and spot the people and wildlife passing by, whilst enjoying the best of traditional South Indian cuisine, served by the head chef onboard.

*Coconut is native to Southern India and spread to Europe, Arabia, and Persia through the southwestern Malabar Coast of South India over the centuries. Coconut of Indian origin was brought to the Americas by Portuguese merchants. Black pepper is also native to the Malabar Coast of India, and the Malabar pepper is extensively cultivated there.*

### TUE 12 Allepey - Cochin (B)(L)(D)

After breakfast we disembark and head onwards to seaside city of Cochin.

*Located by the Arabian Sea, Cochin aka Kochi is a major port city and a tourist hub in the Southern India state of Kerala. For over 600 years, serene Kochi has been drawing traders, explorers and travellers to its shores that formed the first European colonies of colonial India and resulted in a mix of Portuguese, Dutch, and British villages that blended into the tropical Malabar Coast. Nowhere else in India could we find such an intriguing mix: giant fishing nets from China, a 400-year-old synagogue, traditional art-crafts scene complimented with traditional live dances called Kathakali and crumbling remains of the British Raj.*





### WED 13 Cochin

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After breakfast this morning we will take a sightseeing and heritage tour of Cochin. Here we will walk in the old city called Fort Kochi, renowned for a history of drawing explorers to its shores for over 600 years. We discover traditional houses at vibrant Princes Street having a mix of British, Portuguese, and Dutch architecture – witnessing a perfect blend of the new and old colonial era. We reach Old Kochi Beach to view a demonstration by local fisherman using 14th century giant Chinese fishing nets installed by traders of Mongol Empire before continuing our tour inside India's oldest European churches built by Portuguese Friars, the St Francis church where the tomb of Vasco da INDIA Gama rests, and also the whitewashed Santa Cruz Basilica dating back to the 1500's.

This afternoon we visit a local South Indian family home for an ethnic Anglo-Indian Cooking Masterclass, followed by lunch. Our cooking class will include tasting, self-preparation, and demonstration. Next, we drive or hop-on a local Tuk-Tuk to Mattancherry, a hub for spice trading and historic sites, featured inside the 16th century Portuguese/Dutch Palace are preserved murals from Hindu and South Indian epics. We will explore the infamous Jewish Town of Kochi and see the 400-year-old Pardesi Jewish Synagogue. We have time to experience the street markets and take the spice walk as the area has been a trader's hub since 14th century pre-Islamic era, with markets being renowned for trading between Europeans and Arabs since the olden times, and today are home to traditional spices, oils and classic arts-craft.

Before our return to our hotel this evening, we visit a vintage wood-lined theatre for a traditional Kathakali Dance of Kerala and just before the show begins, we are lucky enough to go behind the scenes backstage to witness the dancers with their authentic make-up ceremony and routine, prior to their performance.

Dinner this evening is together at our hotel.

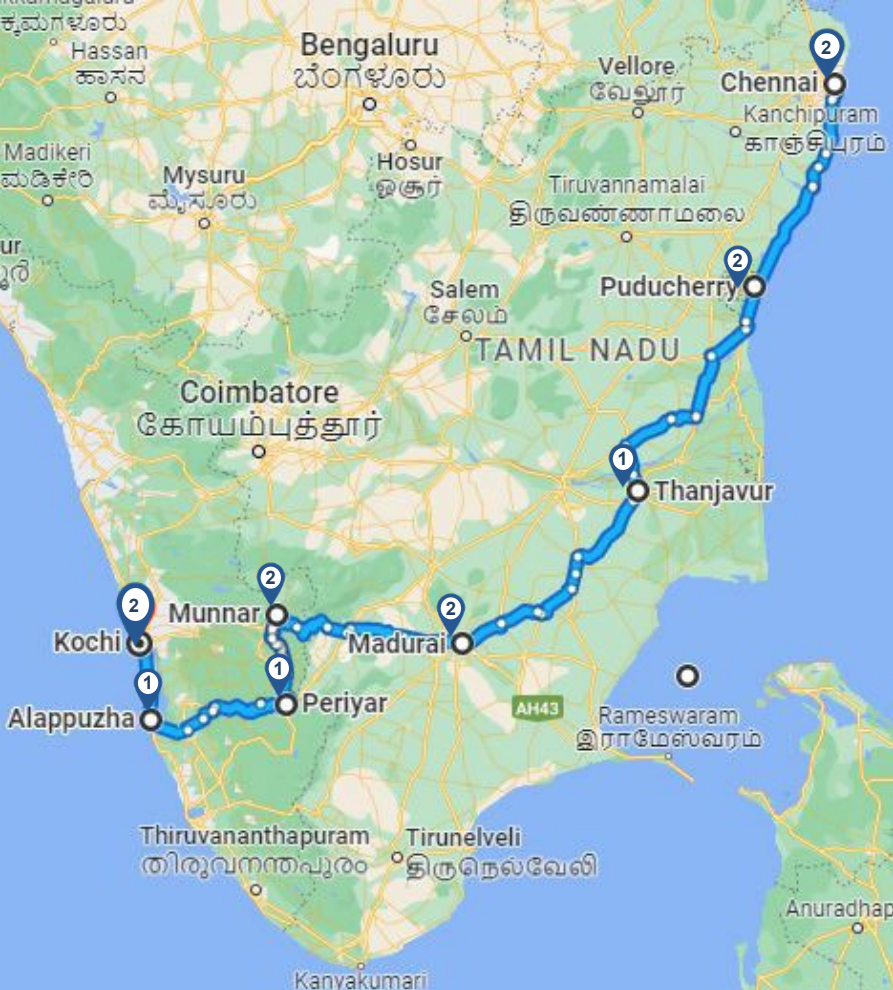
### THU 14 Depart Cochin

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Today is free to relax, do your own activities, or perhaps some last minute shopping, with your hotel room yours to use until our group transfer to Cochin airport later this afternoon for our flight home this evening.

Arriving back in New Zealand on 15<sup>th</sup> November, where will be collected for our onwards transfers home.





# Southern Indian Odyssey

## 15 Day Tour Includes

**YOURTours home pick up** (T&Cs apply)

**Fully hosted from NZ with a YOURTours Host**

**All flights, including domestic flights in NZ and arrival and departure transfers** - (T&Cs apply) Flight upgrade available on request.

**Premium and boutique accommodation**

**All excursions and activities as per itinerary**

**Meals as per itinerary & gratuities**

**Departs 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024**

**Price from \$13,995 pp twin share**

**Single Price from \$17,995 pp**

**You are invited to join us on one of our fully hosted small group tours, with a maximum of 18 guests.**

We are based on the beautiful Kapiti Coast with our guests joining us from all corners of New Zealand. We believe you will be pleasantly surprised by just how much we include in our tour price.

You can be reassured that our tour host will always be one of our friendly well-experienced YOURTours Hosts, ensuring everything is taken care of from start to finish, allowing you to relax and enjoy our tour.

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