



## Classic South India Dossier

### Classic Tour | 14 Days | Physical Level 2

Chennai – Mamallapuram – Pondicherry – Thanjavur – Madurai – Munnar –  
Periyar – Kumarakom - Kochi

Travel through laid-back South India on a classic journey of wildlife, temples and magnificent coastline, soaking up the incredible culture along the way.

- Feel the buzz of Chennai
- Discover ancient rock carvings at Mamallapuram
- Ride a rickshaw through Pondicherry
- Witness an atmospheric Aarti ceremony
- Look for elephants in Periyar
- Cruise Kerala backwaters



### Classic South India tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers)
- Visa fees for Australian passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

*The only things you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.*

### Classic Tours:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of India on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis, so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escort/Local Guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

### Physical Level 2:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights. 'Classic South India' is rated 2 on the physical level scale. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You'll be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps, often without handrails
- You will be required to get on and off various sizes of boats and rickshaws throughout the tour
- This tour includes an overnight stay on a houseboat, often there is no handrail when getting on and off the boats

Of course, our National Escort and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

### Country Profile: India

India evokes images of colourful religious festivals, deserts lined with historic forts, tented camps nestled in sand dunes, delicious food and royal palaces. Abundant wildlife such as the Asian Elephant and the Royal Bengal Tiger are found in the numerous national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. All of these images of India may be experienced on our tours, but the most lasting memories that you will take away with you is of the happy, smiling people.

### Joining Your Tour

The tour is 14 days in duration including international flights. Depending on airline schedules, you may depart or arrive on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only, the price includes visa fees and your arrival/ departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations. Join the tour on Day 1 in Chennai and end the tour on Day 13 in Kochi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

### New Tour for 2019

Wendy Wu Tours is proud to present An Indian Experience as a new tour option for 2019. While we have carefully researched the itinerary, this is the first time this tour has operated and it should be remembered that unforeseen changes or surprises may occur. Although these are unexpected, occurrences may add to the enjoyment of the tour, if this is a concern for you we suggest waiting until a later departure.

### Itinerary Changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

- The domestic airlines in this region have frequent schedule changes. For this reason, we have indicated morning, afternoon or evening flights only in the following section. Your Local Guide or National Escort will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them

## Itinerary – Classic South India

### Day 1: Arrive Chennai

Fly to Chennai. Your National Escort or Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours will meet you at the in the Arrivals Hall. Together with other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer an hour and a half to your hotel and check-in. Depending on your time of arrival the rest of the day is yours to start soaking up the local culture.



### Day 2: Mamallapuram - Pondicherry

This morning start the day soaking up the history of Fort St George, founded by the British in 1644, before journeying to the coastal town of Mamallapuram to view the fascinating 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century rock carvings. Today's sightseeing involves approximately 4 to 5 hours on foot. Continue on to Pondicherry.



#### Destination Information

**Fort St. George** - Built by the British East India Company in 1653, Fort St. George was one of the first bastions of British power in India. The fort is presently used as the offices of the Tamil Nadu Secretariat and the Legislative Assembly. Also visit St. Mary's Church, often described as the Westminster Abbey of the East and India's oldest surviving British church, built in 1680.

**Mamallapuram** - Once the major seaport for the ancient Pallava kingdom, Mamallapuram was named after the cruel mythical King Mahabali who was slayed by Lord Vishnu. Mamallapuram is well-known for its UNESCO World Heritage listed temples and carvings.

**Rock Carvings** - An archaeologists dream, Mamallapuram boasts a large number of stone carvings made on uncut rocks dating from the 7th and 8th centuries. Visit the Shore Temple, the Panch Pandava Rathas and Varaha Cave.

### Day 3: Pondicherry

Today you will visit Sri Aurobindo Ashram; founded in 1926 this vibrant community has almost 1200 members! Then, browse the delights of the Pondicherry Museum, later take a rickshaw ride through the charming French Quarter and enjoy some free time to explore.

#### Destination Information

**Pondicherry** - A French settlement comprising of Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam besides Pondicherry. Uniquely, Pondicherry is spread into several states.



#### Day 4: Pondicherry - Thanjavur

Depart Pondicherry by road for Thanjavur - a 4-hour journey -stopping en route at Kumbakonam for a traditional South Indian lunch. Thanjavur, once called Tanjore, was the capital of the Chola empire and is full of reminders of its great past, one of which you'll explore - the Brahadeeswara Temple, a magnificent example of Tamil architecture.

#### Day 5: Thanjavur – Trichy - Madurai

Travel to the bustling city of Trichy in rural Chettinad and visit Srirangam to gaze on one of southern India's most illustrious temples. Continue to the temple town of Madurai.

#### Day 6: Madurai

One of India's oldest cities, Madurai most celebrated sight is the magnificent Meenakshi Amman Temple, which you'll visit this morning. Continue to admire the Italianate influence at Tirumala Nayakar Palace, built in 1636. This evening, witness an atmospheric Aarti ceremony.

#### Day 7: Madurai - Munnar

Head to the hills today as you drive 5 to 6 hours to the beautiful hill station of Munnar. Upon arrival, proceed to the hotel and check in for overnight stay. Located on the side of a mountain, you can enjoy breathtaking views over the valley. Visit a local tea plantation and the Tata Tea Museum to learn about the timeless cultivation of tea.



##### Destination Information

**Munnar** - A hillstation with vast expanses of tea plantations, sitting at an altitude of 1,524m. Once a favoured summer resort for the British, Munnar features beautiful lush green hills and extensive tea estates.

**The Tata Tea Museum** - The museum houses photographs and machinery, each depict a turning point that contributed to the flourishing tea industry that is evident today.

#### Day 8: Munnar – Thekkady

Depending on the time of year, you may enjoy a walking tour in the Eravikulam National Park. Depart Munnar and begin the 5 hour drive to Thekkady, where Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary is located.

*Please note: Eravikulam National Park is closed from February to April for Nilgiri Tahr mating season. If the park is closed during your visit, touring will be substituted with a walking tour of Munnar.*

##### Destination Information

**Eravikulam National Park** - Situated along the crest of the Western Ghats in the high ranges of Idukki district, the park is approximately 97sq km in size. The park holds the largest viable population of the endangered Nilgiri Tahr, a small stocky goat. Apart from the Nilgiri Tahrs, the national park is home to other animals such as Nilgiri Marten, ruddy mongoose, small-clawed otter and dusky striped squirrel.

### Day 9: Periyar Wildlife Reserve

Rise early this morning to walk through the park, searching for wildlife such as elephants, wild dog, barking deer, mouse deer and the rarely seen spotted tiger. If you do not wish to join the walk, please notify your National Escort or Local Guide for alternative arrangements. Enjoy the afternoon at leisure before viewing a Kalaripayattu performance this evening.



#### Destination Information

**Wildlife in Periyar** - Periyar is home to 62 species of mammals, 320 species of birds, 45 species of reptiles, 27 species of amphibians, 38 species of fish and 160 butterfly species.

**Kalaripayattu performance** - A traditional form of martial arts that started in southern India. Kalaripayattu martial arts incorporate kicks, strikes, grappling and weaponry in their movements.

### Day 10: Thekkady – Houseboat

This morning you will be travelling to Kumarakom, where you will board your overnight houseboat, a converted rice barge known as a 'Kettuvallam'. As you cruise along the backwaters, you will witness the village life of those that live along the banks. What is truly magical about a houseboat ride is the breathtaking view of the untouched and otherwise inaccessible rural Kerala. An unhurried backwater cruise on a traditional houseboat is the best way to discover Kerala's exceptional scenic beauty. Enjoy dinner onboard.



#### Destination Information

**Kerala Backwaters** – A stretch of waters parallel to the coast of the Arabian Sea traditionally used for transportation; nowadays the backwaters attract tourists to a unique experience travelling along a mixture of manmade and natural canals, lakes and rivers. a model fishing village and tourism spot

### Day 11: Houseboat - Kochi

After breakfast on the boat, disembark at Pallathuruthy and head for Kochi via Kumbalangi, a village created to highlight the lifestyle of fisher-folk in the area. This evening, enjoy an exuberant Kathakali dance performance.

#### Destination Information

**Kumbalangi Fishing Village** - Located 20km outside Kochi, Kumbalangi is a unique program which transformed a tiny island into model fishing village where you can learn about local crafts.

**Kochi** - Also known as Cochin. Kochi is Kerala's most cosmopolitan city and its main trading centre for spices and seafood. Built around a saltwater lagoon of the Arabian Sea, Kochi is a collection of narrow islands and peninsulas.

## Day 12: Kochi

Today tour the sites of Kochi, visiting the St. Francis Church and the Santa Cruz Basilica. From the basilica view the unique cantilevered Chinese fishing nets, the only place outside China that they are used. Explore the Jewish synagogue, located in the heart of the Jewish Quarter and enjoy a Kathakali dance performance this evening. Today's sightseeing will involve about 2 to 3 hours on foot.



### Destination Information

**St. Francis Church** - St. Francis Church is thought to be the first European church built in India, constructed by the Portuguese in 1503. The history of this church reflects the colonial struggle of European powers in India from the 15th to 20th centuries. It is said that the Portuguese trader, Vasco da Gama, was originally buried in St. Francis Church before being taken back to Portugal.

**Santa Cruz Basilica** - One of the eight basilicas in India. The Santa Cruz Basilica has an eventful history, which originates back to the arrival of the Portuguese in 1500.

**Cantilevered Chinese fishing nets** - A relic from the 14th century traders, the Chinese fishing nets are still in use today. Locally known as Cheenavala, they are used for a unique and unusual method of fishing and many fishermen earn a living by using these massive nets.

**Jewish Synagogue** - The prosperous Jewish trading community built the Jewish synagogue in 1568. It is the oldest synagogue in India but was partially destroyed in the war of 1662 and was rebuilt by the Dutch.

## Days 13-14: Depart Kochi

Today any time before your flight will be at leisure. You will then be transferred to the airport according to the departure time of your flight to Australia, arriving home the same or following day.

Late check-out is not included in our India group tours. If you wish to book a late check-out for your final day in India, please contact our reservations department who can confirm additional pricing and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel.

## Classic South India Travel Information

### Visas

Entry visas are required by all visitors to India and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining an E-visa and will submit the application on your behalf. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

Please be advised that all E-Visa Applications for India will be completed by Wendy Wu Tours. The information is available from <https://www.wendywutours.com.au/before-you-go/passports-visas-travel-health/> - Wendy Wu Tours requires the information sheet, a clear colour photo in JPEG format and clear colour passport copy emailed through to [documentation@wendywutours.com.au](mailto:documentation@wendywutours.com.au). Visas are valid for 120 days from the date of issue and allow you to stay in the country for up to 60 days. Visa application forms and all relevant documentation are due in our office 75 days prior to departure. Applications will not be accepted within 30 days of departure. E-Visas will be included with your final documentation approximately three to four weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure. If you require your E-Visa organised earlier, please contact us.

### Insurance

We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

Wendy Wu Tours 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.

### Eating in India

Indian cuisine is one of the most influential, diverse and flavoursome culinary styles in the world. Indian dishes incorporate many spices and seasoning to create an explosion of flavors. Though Indian cuisine can vary greatly from the Indian food we get in Australia, it is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our classic group tours, from dinner on the arrival day until breakfast on the day of departure. Please be aware that dishes selected for your meals reflect the cooking styles and signature dishes of the local area you are in.

Dishes served in restaurants on our group tours are varied. Some will be vegetable-based with meat mixed in, and a few will be meat-based. Our restaurants are well aware of the western palate – there are plenty of non-spiced options. When eating meals on group tours, you will usually be seated around a large table with other tour members. Dishes will be served in the traditional 'family style'; meaning that various dishes will be laid out in the centre of the table. These dishes are intended to be shared amongst the group – there is always more than enough to feed everybody.

Please read your travel guide, which you will receive with your final documents for more information about eating in India. We recommend that when it comes to Indian food, you stay open minded and try to be adventurous!



## Accommodation

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family-run guesthouse in a smaller town or a heritage-type hotel. In remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and India. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards are met. Please note that double bed requests can be made at time of booking but can't be guaranteed.

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and a telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort or Local Guide.

On this tour, you will stay on a houseboat, or 'Kettuvallam', which has all the comforts of a good hotel including furnished bedrooms, modern toilets, cozy living rooms, a kitchen and even a balcony for angling. Parts of the curved roof of wood or plaited palm open out to provide shade and allow uninterrupted views. Please note: While on the houseboats, electricity can be intermittent. There is a generator on board, so keep this in mind when charging phones, cameras or other electronic items. The cabins on board are all air conditioned from 9pm to 6am, but the living areas and deck may be cooled with fans. If you are a light sleeper you may wish to bring ear plugs, as the generators may be loud at night.

## Transport

**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Due to Indian Government regulations the use of curtains, tinted glass windows are prohibited across India. Main and inner-city roads in India have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in India have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections above are approximations only.

**Planes:** Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Pre-flight seat allocation is not available on international and internal flight sectors.

## Development in India

Although India is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday, so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

### Public Holidays in India

If you are travelling within the below Indian Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed, and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open but may be crowded. India Republic Day is on 26<sup>th</sup> January, the Holi Festival 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> March 2019 (The Hindu 'Festival of Colours' can include locals smearing coloured powder on one another. Every effort will be made to minimise the effect on passengers whilst touring). Diwali Festival is on 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2019.

### Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions, which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone, so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

### Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 28 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with Local Guides.

### Tipping Policy

Local tipping is customary in Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

### Cultural Difference

India has many religions, cultures and histories. Foreign tourists, particularly female travelers, may be stared at as Indian women in some areas generally do not go out without their father or husband. Please be considerate of this, the local beliefs and customs and dress with consideration and modesty.

### Appropriate Dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and trousers or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more

comfortable while sightseeing at mosques. When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout India – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are ‘shoe minders’ who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a ‘tip’ – this is not compulsory, so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside. We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces.

### Climbing Steps

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

### Packing list and Climate

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the ‘Suggested Packing List’, which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

### Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 15kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

### Exchanging Cash

It is highly recommended that when travelling to cities outside of Delhi and other main cities that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout India however, other currencies such as Australian Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort/Local Guide will remind you to do this before departure.

### Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

**Personal Expense** - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of \$250AUD per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

**Optional Tours** - May be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. In your Final Documentation an Optional Excursion Sheet will be included outlining the activities available in each city and local cost associated. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

### Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful [www.travelvax.com.au](http://www.travelvax.com.au)

### Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website

### After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

**Last updated 29/03/19**