



On this classic tour, you will have the chance to discover the popular, Southern state of Kerala. From cosmopolitan, modern cities to wildlife sanctuaries, India's oldest tiger reserves, and cruising the stunning backwaters of a lake on a houseboat.

Kerala Experience

Classic Tour | 9 Days | Physical Level 1

Kochi – Munnar – Thekkady - Kumarakom – Alleppey - Kochi

- Experience the magnificent wildlife
- Tour culturally rich Kochi
- Explore Munnar's blue lakes
- See fishing villages in Kumarakom
- Travel through the paddy fields
- See ancient Chinese fishing nets



Kerala Experience 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 AU 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, 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 1:

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. 'Kerala Experience' is rated 1 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.

Of course, our National Escorts 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. If you require any more information about the pace of our tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

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 9 days in duration including international flights. Due to flight schedules you may arrive/depart 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 Kochi and end the tour on Day 8 in Kochi.

Itinerary Changes

Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure. 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.

Itinerary – Kerala Experience

Days 1: Arrive Kochi

Fly to Kochi (formerly Cochin) which is known as the gateway to Kerala. You will be met and transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure.



Destination Information

Kochi – Kochi is situated on the south-west coast of the Indian Peninsula, in Kerala. It is known as Queen of the Arabian Sea and Gateway to Kerala. Kochi is flanked by the Western Ghats mountain range on the east and Arabian Sea on the west. It gained its importance over the centuries as a strategic maritime centre and is rich in history, heritage and culture.

Day 2: Kochi to Munnar

Today you will drive four and a half hours to Munnar, stopping enroute visiting Athirapally Waterfalls, which is a favorite tourist spot. Check-in at your hotel on arrival and spend the rest of the day relaxing in Munnar.



Destination Information

Athirapally Waterfalls – The best waterfalls in India, located on the Chalakudy River at the entrance to Sholayar hill range. These waterfalls drop from a height of 80 feet offering a scenic beauty. It offers spectacular views from the hill.

Munnar – Kerala's famous hill station sits 5000 feet in the Western Ghats mountains range, surrounded by rolling hills and dotted with tea plantations. Tea is Munnar's claim to fame which explains the 12000 hectares of beautifully landscaped tea fields. It is also popular for its exotic species of flora and fauna.

Day 3: Munnar

After breakfast you will spend the day discovering Munnar. Enjoy a walking tour in Eravikulam National Park that holds the worlds largest viable population of Nilgiri Tahr, an endangered mountain goat. This afternoon you will visit the tea factory and museum to learn all about how the plantations are run and the production process of tea.



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

Destination Information

Eravikulam National Park – Situated in the high ranges of Idukki district, the park is approximately 97sq km in size. The park is home to Nilgiri Marten, ruddy mongoose, small-clawed otter and dusky striped squirrels. The park also hosts the very rare Neelakurinji flower that blooms only once in twelve years with the next sighting expected to be in 2030.

Day 4: Munnar to Thekkady

Depart Munnar this morning and travel the ninety- eight kilometers to Thekkady, where you will check-in at your hotel.

The afternoon is at leisure before enjoying a Kalaripayattu martial arts show, which originated in ancient South India and is one of the oldest fighting methods. It is a Dravidian martial art that includes kicks, strikes, weaponry and healing methods.



Destination Information

Thekkady – A nature rich area with high ranges and wooded valleys surrounded by the Periyar River. Thekkady offers diverse attractions with wildlife sanctuaries, hill stations, spice plantations and a large population of tribal's, with unique customs and beliefs and maintain an ethos that is distinctly different from the mainstream culture.

Day 5: Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary

This morning you will visit Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary and enjoy a boat ride on the lake, giving you an opportunity to observe the wildlife and bird life. The highlight of this trip would be to watch the herds of elephant that come down to play in the lake. Climbing the Sanctuary watch tower will afford you a panoramic view of the park. This afternoon you will visit a spice plantation.



Destination Information

Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary - This sanctuary is also known as Periyar Tiger Sanctuary and is home to tigers and a significant elephant population, as well as rare lion-tailed macaques, deer, Indian bison and leopards. It offers dense vegetation, an artificial lake and is a protected area.

Day 6: Thekkady to Kumarakom

Check out of the hotel and drive to Kumarakom where you will board your houseboat for the night. Traditionally they are called Kettuvalloms which are old barges used to ferry rice and spices. You will cruise along the backwaters to Alleppey, enjoying lunch and dinner onboard. Enjoy the natural beauty around you, seeing paddy fields, narrow canals and local villagers fishing.



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.

Day 7: Alleppey to Kochi

Disembark your houseboat after breakfast and travel one and a half hours back to Kochi. Once there you will be taken on a city tour, visiting the Dutch Palace, Jewish Quarter and Fort Kochi.

This evening you will enjoy a farewell dinner and Kathakali dance performance.



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.

Dutch Palace – Built by the Portuguese in 1555 as a gift for the Maharaja of Kochi. It was then renovated by the Dutch in 1663 and now houses the rare royal memorabilia and artefacts, a series of murals depicting scenes from the Hindu epics Mahabharata and Ramayana.

Day 8-9: Depart Kochi

After breakfast and check out, depending on your flight time, transfer to the airport for your return 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.

Kerala Experience 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 a visa. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

For the latest information on visa procedures, processing times and requirements, please kindly refer to our website <https://www.wendywutours.com.au/help-and-advice/passports-and-visas/>

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate, Wendy Wu acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

Wendy Wu Tours does not accept responsibility for lost or undelivered items.

All information with regards to visas will be updated regularly on our website as we find visas process' are changing on regular basis.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also 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 original.

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 flavours. 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.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead.

Those with dietary requirements will be well catered for - just make sure to inform your booking agent of any specific requirements well in advance of your trip.

All the restaurants we visit will be researched and inspected regularly to ensure that they follow the strictest health, cleanliness, and safety guidelines. All waiting staff will wear face masks and gloves and self-service buffets will be avoided in favour of à la carte dining, waiter-served meals, or waiter-assisted buffets. Hand sanitiser will be provided to the group before and after every food and beverage service.

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 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.

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 26th January, the Holi Festival 9th – 28th March 2021 (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 4th November 2021.

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 travellers, 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 backpack – 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. If visiting Jain temples independently (these are not included in this itinerary), 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 backpack, 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.

Altitude

Please note on Day 10 you will visit Eravikulam National Park which is at an altitude of 2700 metres. Altitude Sickness is a risk. Symptoms may include dizziness, fatigue, nausea and shortness of breath. There are no specific factors, such as age or fitness, that can cause you to suffer from altitude sickness. This can affect anyone at any time and symptoms may vary. All the hotels that we have selected to use on our programmes provide oxygen free of charge, please ask to use this. There is medication - that can help treat and prevent symptoms. Consult a doctor before taking any of these medications, before engaging in strenuous activity at high altitude and regarding any necessary vaccinations in plenty of time before travelling

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

Luggage

All travelers 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 AU\$250 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. 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

Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with 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 3 weeks prior to departure.

Last updated September 2020