



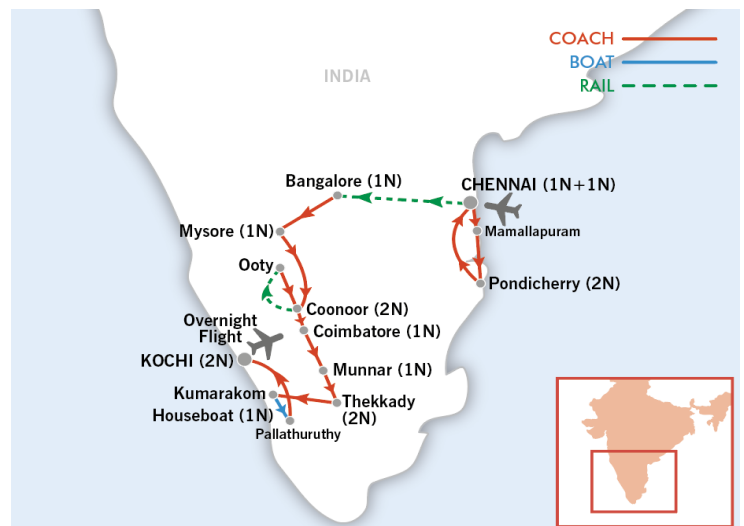
## Kerala & The Southern Highlights Dossier Classic Tour | 17 Days | Moderate

Chennai – Pondicherry - Bangalore – Mysore – Coonoor – Coimbatore - Munnar –  
Thekkady – Kumarakom – Kochi

This fascinating tour will entice even the most widely travelled individual. Southern India is very different from the north, providing stark contrasts between spices, food, cultures and climate.

### TOUR HIGHLIGHTS:

- Relax in Chennai
- Cool off in Coonoor
- Ride Ooty's toy train
- Gaze over tea plantations
- Cruise Kerala's backwaters
- Admire sacred sites



## Kerala & the Southern Highlights tour inclusions

- Return international 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)

*Personal expenditures 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 are at your own expense.*

## Classic Tour

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of India on an excellent value group tour while 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.

## Moderate Tour

'Kerala & the Southern Highlights' is a moderate tour. This means that the itinerary requires a good level of fitness.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time
- Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps, often without handrails
- You may be required to get on and off various sizes of boats, rickshaws and safari vehicles throughout the tour

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 17 days in duration including international flights.

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 16 in Kochi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your 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.

## Changes:

- Removed one night in Chennai / Added two nights in Pondicherry to enhance customer experience
- Removed one night in Hassan and the touring here which was Sravanabelagola the Pilgrimage site and the Belur and Halebid Temples.
- Added one night in Coimbatore / Removed 1 night in Munnar. This is to break up the very long journey (11 hours) as customers will now spend one less night in Munnar. We have removed the gallery visit and Mattupetty Dam, based on previous customer feedback this will relax the pace of the tour.
- 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

## Important Information Regarding Itinerary Changes and Flight Delays

Due to unforeseen circumstances, flights can be delayed, and therefore connecting flights may be missed. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact our India office on **+91 98 1899 0222/+91 98 1048 8398** (outside India) or **98 1899 0222/98 1048 8398** (within India) to urgently advise your arrival details have changed. Please ensure you have your trip number, tour name (both included in your final documentation) and new arrival details (flight number and arrival time) handy to pass on to our local office in India. This will ensure your National Escort/Local Guide can be informed of your most up to date information and ensure someone is at the airport to meet you on arrival. There is also a dedicated duty officer available 24 hours a day at the international airport, who can be contacted on **+91 81 3039 1236** if required upon arrival in Delhi.

If we are not advised of late changes and missed connections, Wendy Wu Tours cannot guarantee someone will be able to meet you upon arrival in India as our local office will have no way of knowing which flight you will be arriving on. Wendy Wu Tours will not be responsible for providing reimbursement of transportation costs from the airport to your hotel in the event that our local office was not advised of change.

## Kerala & the Southern Highlights Itinerary

### DAY 1: AUSTRALIA TO CHENNAI

Fly to Chennai. Your National Escort or Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours will meet you in the Arrivals Hall. Together with other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer 30 minutes to your hotel and check-in.

#### Destination Information

**Chennai** - Originally known as Madras, Chennai is India's fourth largest city. It was developed as a British trading post and as such, most of its attractions have a distinct colonial influence. In the last few years, Chennai has become a major commercial, cultural, economic and educational centre in southern India. A major part of India's automobile industry is based in Chennai, as well as computer technology, hardware manufacturing and healthcare sectors.

### DAY 2: CHENNAI TO PONDICHERRY

This morning a tour introduction will either be held in the hotel or on the coach. Drive to Pondicherry, en route visiting the coastal temple town of Mamallapuram to see the rock carvings which date from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### Destination Information

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

**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 of uncut rocks dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Visit the Shore Temple, the Panch Pandava Rathas and Varaha Cave.

### DAY 3: PONDICHERRY

During your morning tour, visit Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the Pondicherry Museum, home to some of the most exquisite collections of sculpture. Pondicherry also has a pleasant beach alongside the promenade and historical monuments. This evening's dinner will be arranged in one of the restaurants in town, where you will be taken by a

local French-speaking rickshaw puller (rickshaws are subject to availability and cannot be guaranteed).

#### **Destination Information**

**Sri Aurobindo Ashram** - Is a spiritual community where Sri Aurobindo and The Mother lived for the most part of their lives.

#### **DAY 4: PONDICHERRY TO CHENNAI**

This morning after breakfast, drive back to Chennai. On arrival, commence your tour of Chennai city, starting with a visit to Marina Beach, which stretches for over 13km. Head to Fort St. George to explore, and later visit the Kapaleeswarar Temple. Today's sightseeing involves approximately four to five hours on foot.

#### **Destination Information**

**Marina Beach** - The second longest beach in the world Marina Beach stretches over 13km, from Fort St. George in the north to Besant Nager in the south.

**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.

**Kapaleeswarar Temple** - Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the most powerful god of the Hindu religion. Situated at Mylapore, it is over 350 years old and is considered by Hindus to be one of the most sacred sites in southern India.

#### **DAY 5: CHENNAI TO BANGALORE**

Rise extra early this morning to catch the Shatabdi Express train to Bangalore, your journey will be approximately four and half hours. You will be given a simple, light breakfast as well as beverages while on the train. If you require additional food, please purchase this the day before. Upon arrival, proceed to your hotel to check in. This afternoon, tour the city, beginning with the Bull Temple, before continuing to Tipu Sultan's Palace and Vidhana Soudha.

*Please note - Your train is a day train and our seats will be in an air-conditioned chair car. The train carriages are shared so at all times please be aware of your belongings.*

#### **Destination Information**

**Bangalore** - The capital of the state of Karnataka, Bangalore is known as the 'Garden City' because of its countless parks and avenues of Jacaranda, Gulmohur and Cassia.

**Bull Temple** - One of Bangalore's oldest temples, the Bull Temple is dedicated to Nandi Bull, the vehicle of Lord Shiva. Located inside the temple is a huge idol of Nandi Bull, said to be cut from a single rock.

**Tipu Sultan's Palace** - Construction began on the summer residence of the Mysorean ruler Tipu Sultan in 1781 by Hyder Ali and was completed in 1791 during the reign of Tipu Sultan. Made almost entirely of teak, the palace is finely embellished with balconies, pillars and arches.

**Vidhana Soudha** - Located over Cubbon Park, Vidhana Soudha is a magnificent white granite building which houses the State Legislature and the Secretariat of Karnataka.

#### **DAY 6: BANGALORE TO MYSORE**

Drive south to Mysore today, stopping to view Srirangapatna Fort en route. This afternoon, explore the Maharaja's Palace, the Art Gallery and drive to Chamundi Hills to see the Sri Chamundeshwari Temple. Today's sightseeing involves approximately three hours of easy walking, there is a temple and mosque inside the complex. Return to your hotel stopping to discover the Nandi Bull statue, carved out of solid rock in 1659. Later, enjoy a traditional cooking demonstration hosted by a local family.

#### **Destination Information**

**Srirangapatna Fort** – This fort was the stronghold of Tipu Sultan, son of Hyder Ali. Here at the fort, Tipu made a last-minute ditch defence against the British in 1799 before surrendering his Kingdom upon his death. Among the many fort buildings still intact are Tipu's airy summer palace and his tomb at the Darya Daulat Bagh (a garden). Also located here is the celebrated Sri Ranganathswamy Temple.

**Mysore** – Mysore, known as the 'City of Palaces', is well known for its splendid royal history and the magnificent buildings. Once the administrative capital of the Wodeyar Dynasty, Mysore still retains old world charm with its small alleys, temples, glorious palaces and sprawling gardens.

**Maharaja's Palace** – Located in the heart of the city, Maharaja's Palace is one of the grandest of India's royal buildings. The original palace was destroyed by fire in 1897, the current palace now standing was built between 1911 and 1912 in Indo-Saracenic style and blends together Hindu, Muslim, Rajput, and Gothic styles of architecture.

**Chamundi Hills and Sri Chamundeshwari Temple** – Visible from almost anywhere in Mysore, Chamundi Hills stands at 1,062m-high and is one of the prime landmarks in Mysore. Drive to the top to see the 12<sup>th</sup> century Sri

Chamundeshwari Temple. The temple is dedicated to the Hindu Goddess Durga, and offers a panoramic view of Mysore city.

#### **DAY 7: MYSORE TO COONOR**

Head to the hills today as you drive five to six hours to the beautiful hill station of Coonoor. Tour the hill station, visiting the stone churches and driving past the Ooty Club. This evening is at leisure to take an optional walk around the hill station or enjoy some free time.

#### **Destination Information**

**Coonoor** - Located on the Western Ghats at the height of 1,839m, Coonoor is the second largest hill station in the Nilgiri hills in the state of Tamil Nadu and is famous for its tea plantations and the variety of wildflowers and birds.

#### **DAY 8: COONOR TO OOTY**

Transfer a short distance to the station this morning to catch the miniature, narrow gauge Toy Train from Coonoor to Ooty, another Nilgiri hill station which takes approximately one hour and 20 minutes. Visit the terraced botanical gardens. Later there is an optional short walk to a local village, situated above the botanical gardens, where you can gain an insight into the lives of the local people while enjoying the amazing view over Ooty. Return to Coonoor by coach.

*Please note that the train timetable is subject to change - your National Escort or Local Guide will inform you of changes as they are made aware of them.*

#### **Destination Information**

**Ooty** - Known as the 'Queen of Hill Stations', Ooty sits at an altitude of 2,240m and was established by the British in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to serve as the summer headquarters of the Madras (now Chennai) Government. Until about two decades ago, Ooty resembled an unlikely combination of southern England and Australia, with single-storey stone cottages, fenced flower gardens, leafy, winding lanes and tall eucalyptus trees.

**Botanical Gardens** - Created in 1847, the botanical gardens are home to many species of trees, including a 20 million-year-old fossilised tree.

#### **DAY 9: COONOR TO COIMBATORE**

This morning, drive through the hilly roads for three and half hours to Coimbatore. This afternoon, enjoy half a day of sightseeing of Coimbatore including visits to the Sri Svetambra Vimalanathar Jain Temple, St. Michael Xavier

Church at big Bazaar and Athar Jamid Mosque at Oppamalar Street.

#### **Destination Information**

**Coimbatore** - Surrounded by the Western Ghats Mountain Range that runs parallel to the western coast of India, Coimbatore is as an emerging city and the second largest city in Tamil Nadu.

#### **DAY 10: COIMBATORE TO MUNNAR**

Today you will be driving for approximately five hours as you continue the descent from the highlands and head to Munnar. As you drive to Munnar, you cross the border into Kerala, one of the smallest states in the Republic of India. Upon arrival proceed to the hotel and check in for an 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 11: MUNNAR TO THEKKADY**

Depending on the time of year, you may enjoy a walking tour in the Eravikulam National Park this morning or alternatively a trek through Letchmi Hill.

#### **MUNNAR TO THEKKADY (January to April)**

This morning you will transfer 3 km from Munnar to commence your trek of Letchmi Hills. The trek will take approximately three to four hours and involve a distance of 5km. At times, the terrain will be uneven with some hills. The views of the surrounding grasslands, distant rocky mountain slopes and tea plantations are worth the trek. Enjoy a picnic lunch before departing Munnar and drive five hours to Thekkady, where Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary is located.

#### **Destination Information**

**Letchmi Hills** - Surrounded by verdant grasslands and fragrant tea and spice plantations, Letchmi Hills is an ideal place to spot native birds on this section of the Western Ghats.

OR

### **MUNNAR TO THEKKADY (May to December)**

This morning enjoy a walking tour of Eravikulam National Park for approximately three hours. Keeping a look out for the parks most famous resident the endangered Nilgiri Tahr. Please note you will be walking over uneven ground for part of this walk. Depart Munnar and begin the five hour drive to Thekkady, where Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary is located.

#### **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 12: THEKKADY**

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 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 incorporates kicks, strikes, grappling and weaponry in their movements.

### **DAY 13: THEKKADY TO KUMARAKOM**

Depart Thekkady and drive for five and a half hours 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.

*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, 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.*

#### **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.

**Kettuvallam** - Houseboats, or 'Kettuvallams' have 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.

### **DAY 14: HOUSE BOAT – KOCHI**

After breakfast on board, disembark your houseboat and drive to Kochi. Stop en route at a local market in Alleppey and a coir factory. Upon arrival in Kochi check into your hotel for a two night stay. After lunch visit Kumbalangi fishing village.

#### **Destination Information**

**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.

**Kumbalangi Fishing Village** - Located 20km outside Kochi, Kumbalangi is a unique program which transformed a tiny island into a model fishing village and tourism spot.

### **DAY 15: 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 two to three 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 15<sup>th</sup>

to 20<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 16-17: KOCHI TO AUSTRALIA**

You will be transferred to the airport according to the departure time of your flight today arriving home the same or following day.

Any time before your flight will be at leisure.

*Late check out at 18:00 is included.*

## **KERALA & THE SOUTHERN HIGHLIGHTS 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.

**Please be advised that all Visa Applications for India must be completed on-line at the VFS website: [www.vfsglobal.com/india/australia](http://www.vfsglobal.com/india/australia)** - Wendy Wu Tours will assist you with instructions. Once the form is completed, the application and passport must be sent to Wendy Wu Tours. Visas are valid for six months from the date of issue and allow you to stay in the country for up to six months. Visa application forms and all relevant documentation are due in our office 75 days prior to departure. Applications will not be accepted within 50 days of departure. Passports will be returned with your final documentation four weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure. If you require your passport to be returned earlier, a \$15AUD courier fee will apply.

### **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.

### **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 fully inclusive Classic group tour, from the groups' arrival until the groups' 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, vegetable based with meat mixed in, and a few will be solely 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 be seated around a circular 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 top. 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

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/Local Guide.

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 cannot be guaranteed.

**Alternative Accommodation** - In Kerala, you will be staying overnight on board a traditional style houseboat called a kettuvallams

## Early Check-In/Late Check-out

Early check-in is not included in our Indian group tours. If you wish to add early check-in to your booking, please contact our reservations department who can confirm additional pricing and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel. Late check-out until 1800hrs is included in this group tour for passengers travelling on our fully inclusive package in the last hotel of stay.

## 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 is prohibited in coaches/buses & taxis 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 below are approximations only.

*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.*

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

**Trains:** Getting on and off the trains in India can be quite disorderly and amusing as passengers will start boarding well before people have finished getting off! If your group is disembarking at a stop that is not the end of the line, the train will only stop for 10 minutes and you must have your luggage ready and by your side a few minutes before the train pulls into the station.

## Development in India

Although India is developing quickly, they still lack 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/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 1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018 (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 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

## 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 both a National Escort/Local Guides. There will usually be no more than 29 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 only.

## 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.

## 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 AUD\$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. 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.

## 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.

## Cultural Differences

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 pants 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 socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

## 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 with deposit documentation via email. This includes important information and links to access the visa application form and instructions sheet online (if applicable). Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately four weeks prior to departure.

**Updated: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017**