



KERALA & SOUTHERN HIGHLIGHTS

Classic Tour | 18 Days | Physical Level 2

Chennai – Mamallapuram – Bangalore – Mysore – Ooty – Coimbatore –
Munnar – Thekkady – Kochi – Backwater Cruise –
Kovalam

Southern India offers an intensely tropical and laidback experience compared to the north. Travel from the stunning hill stations to the tranquil backwaters on this in-depth journey.

- Discover Vibrant Chennai
- Ride Ooty's Toy train
- Experience Mysore
- Cool off in the tea plantations
- Cruise Kerala's backwaters

TOUR MAP



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 Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) and Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Visa fees for Australian passport holders

The only thing 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 check out 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 Escorts and 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. Kerala & The Southern Highlights 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.

- 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 will be required to get on and off various sizes of boats and rickshaws throughout the tour

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.

JOINING YOUR TOUR:

The tour is 18 days in duration including an overnight international flight in one direction as this is the most likely flight option from Australia.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour, or when booking pre and post night accommodation with Wendy Wu Tours. Please email your international flight times to info@wendywutours.com.au so we can arrange your transfers accordingly.

Join the tour on Day 1 in Chennai and end the tour on Day 17 in Trivandrum. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It's 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'll make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrive Chennai**Meals: D**

On arrival in Chennai you will be met at the airport arrival hall by your National Escort or Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours. Together with other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer to your hotel in Chennai.

Please note the early-check in is not included and for any additional nights or early-check in, contact reservations.



Destination Information

Chennai – The capital of Tamil Nadu state. This city is amongst one of the most visited cities in India and is rich in religion and culinary traditions.

Day 2: Mamallapuram**Meals: B, L, D**

This morning a tour introduction will be held in the hotel before setting off for Mamallapuram, which is an hour and a half drive away.

Explore the costal temple town of Mamallapuram to see the rock carvings which date from the 7th and 8th centuries. This afternoon there will be some time at leisure to relax.



Destination Information

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: Mamallapuram to Chennai

Meals: B, L, D

This morning after breakfast, you will travel the one and a half hours back to Chennai, covering 57km. 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, and later visit the Shiva Kapaleeswarar Temple. Today's sightseeing involves approximately 4 - 5 hours on foot.

**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.

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 4: Chennai to Bangalore

Meals: B, L, D

Rise early this morning to catch the Shatabdi Express train to Bangalore, your journey will be approximately 4.5 hours. You will be given a simple, light breakfast as well as beverages while on the train. If you require additional food, please purchase it 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. It is also home to an expanding IT industry.

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 Tipur Sultan. Made almost entirely of teak, the palace is finely embellished with balconies, pillars and arches.

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

Day 5: Bangalore to Mysore

Meals: B, L, D

Drive south to Mysore today, stopping to view Srirangapatnam 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 3 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.

Destination Information

Srirangapatnam 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.

Day 6: Mysore to Ooty

Meals: B, L, D

Today you will journey approximately 4.5 – 5 hours to the hill station of Ooty, one of three Nilgiris stations, popularly known as Queen of Hill Stations. The estimated four-hour drive takes you to a beautiful scenery and cooler climate. 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.



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 19th 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.

Day 7: Ooty to Coonoor

Meals: B, L, D

Transfer a short distance to the station this morning to catch the miniature, narrow gauge Toy Train from Ooty to Coonoor, another Nilgiri hill station which takes approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes. Return to Ooty by coach.



Go on to visit the terraced botanical garden.

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. Please be aware that the train journey may be cancelled by the authorities in the event of bad weather. Should this occur, an alternative experience will be arranged for the group.

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.

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

Day 8: Ooty to Coimbatore

Meals: B, L, D

This morning drive through the hilly roads for 3.5 hours to Coimbatore. This afternoon, enjoy half a day of sightseeing of Coimbatore including visits to the Sri Svetambra Vimalanthar Jain Temple, St. Michael Xavier Church at big Bazaar and Athar Jamid Mosque at Oppamalar Street.



Sightseeing will be approximately 1.5 – 2 hours today.

Destination Information

Coimbatore - Also known as Kovai and said to be the second largest city in the state, visitors from around the world stop here to see religious temples, mosques and historical monuments.

Day 9: Coimbatore to Munnar

Meals: B, L, D

Today you will be driving for approximately 6 – 6.5 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 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 10: Munnar to Thekkady

Meals: B, L, D

Depending on the time of year, you may enjoy a walking tour in Eravikulam National Park where you will have the opportunity to spot the local wildlife.

Please note, this day is at altitude. Eravikulam National Park stands at 2,700m)

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.



Depart Munnar and journey 5 hours to Thekkady, home of the Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary.

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 11: Thekkady

Meals: B, L, D

Rise early this morning to walk through the park, searching for wildlife such as elephants, wild dog, barking deer, mouse deer and the elusive Bengal tiger. If you do not wish to join the walk, please notify your National Escort or Local Guide for alternative arrangements.

Later visit a local spice village and market, before viewing a Kalaripayattu Martial Arts performance this evening.



Please note that trousers and long sleeves are needed for your nature walk through the wildlife sanctuary.

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 12: Thekkady to Kochi

Meals: B, L, D

Depart Thekkady and drive for 5 hours to Kochi, upon arrival check into your hotel for a two-night stay.

This evening enjoy a Kathakali dance performance.

**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.

Day 13: Kochi

Meals: B, L, D

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.

Today's sightseeing will involve about 2 to 3 hours on foot.



Later, enjoy a traditional cooking demonstration followed by dinner.

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.

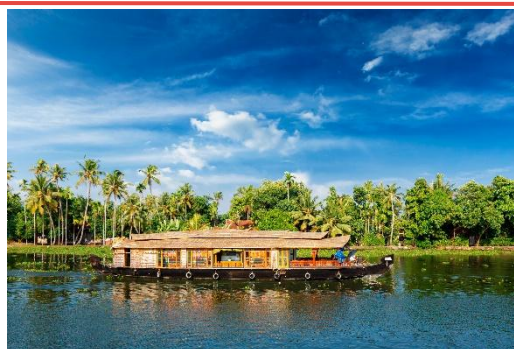
Cantilevered Chinese fishing nets - A relic from the 14th century traders, the Chinese fishing nets are still in use today. Locally known as Cheenavala, they are used for a unique and unusual method of fishing and many fishermen earn a living by using these massive nets.

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.

Day 14: Backwaters cruising

Meals: B, L, D

This morning visit Kumbalangi fishing village before travelling to Alleppey, 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 that whilst the accommodation on these houseboats is simple, the experience is truly unique and incomparable to any other on this trip. Should you require hot water during your stay, please ask a member of the crew for assistance.

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.

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 15: Houseboat to Kovalam

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast on board, disembark your houseboat and drive 5 – 5.5 hours to Kovalam.

Enjoy a couple of hours' sightseeing in Trivandrum on the way. Tour the Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple from the outside (as non-Hindus are not allowed to enter the Temple) before continuing to the Zoological Gardens and Museum.



Later visit the Observatory, the Kanakakunnu Palace and Sree Moolamthirunal Shastri Purthi Memorial. On arrival in Kovalam check into your hotel.

Destination Information

Kovalam - Until the 1960s, Kovalam was just a sleepy fishing village with narrow lanes and thatched dwellings with wide courtyards for drying fish. Now Kovalam is a charming resort town with a popular beach.

Day 16: Kovalam

Meals: B, L, D

Take a walking tour of the town this morning visiting the seafront and Kovalam's lighthouse.

This afternoon is free to explore the long stretches of white sandy beach or relax in the resort before a farewell meal this evening with the group.



Days 17-18: Depart Trivandrum

Meals: B

You will be transferred to the airport according to the departure time of your overnight flight today. Your tour arrangements finish after breakfast and any time before your flight will be at leisure.

Please note late check-out is not included. Additional nights before and after your tour can be arranged. Please contact our Reservations team to book.



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

All guests travelling to India must complete a mandatory digital e-Arrival card 72 hours prior to their arrival. The form can be completed and submitted online at indianvisaonline.gov.in/earrival/. Once completed, Travellers will receive a QR code to display upon arrival.

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 Tours 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.

INSURANCE:

It is a condition of your booking that you are insured for the duration of your trip. We recommend comprehensive travel insurance to cover cancellation, medical requirements, luggage, repatriations and additional expenses. At a minimum, the policy is required to cover medical requirements including medical evacuations / repatriations. The choice of insurer is yours.

We strongly suggest you purchase insurance at the time you pay your deposit. This is because cancellation fees and charges are payable from that time. We may request you to provide evidence that you have taken out and paid for a policy to comply with this condition. If you fail to provide a certificate of currency of insurance within a reasonable time after our request, then this will be deemed a cancellation by you and standard cancellation fees will apply.

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.

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!

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 a 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.

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.

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, 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. 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.

Trains: This trip involves a train journey in AC class cars. Getting on and off the trains in India can be quite disordered 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

PORTERAGE:

Please be aware that porterage is not included on our tours in India. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

LUGGAGE:

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each: a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg 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.

SOUVENIRS:

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions that 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 that hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

TIPPING POLICY:

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and India is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed amongst your main service providers (for

example local guides and drivers) throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour

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 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 guide.

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.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:

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 on the 4th March 2026 (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 (festival of light) is on October 20th 2025 & November 8th 2026.

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.

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.smarttraveller.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 including 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.

Updated: October 2025