



SOUTHERN INDIA BY RAIL

Classic Tour | 16 Days | Physical Level 2

Chennai - Tanjore - Madurai - Trivandrum - Alleppey -
Cochin - Ooty - Bangalore

Traveling through southern India by rail can be a fascinating and convenient way to explore the diverse landscapes, cultures, and heritage of this region. From the bustling metropolitan aura of Chennai Central to the verdant hills of Mysuru. As the train snakes its way through Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, scenery transforms seamlessly – from the sun-drenched coastlines of the Bay of Bengal to the lush, palm-fringed backwaters of Kerala. This journey offers not just a passage through geographic terrains but also a captivating experience into the heart and soul of southern India.

- Explore the ancient city of Kanchipuram
- Witness the arti ceremony at Minakshi Temple
- Discover culinary delights in Madurai's vibrant streets
- Cruise on a traditional houseboat through Kerala's backwaters
- Enjoy the picturesque Toy Train ride
- Visit key landmarks and cultural sites in Bangalore

To book call **1300 727 998** or visit your local travel agent

Visit wendywutours.com.au

TOUR MAP



SOUTHERN INDIA BY 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, Train Tickets and transfers
- English speaking National Escorts and Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

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 Southern 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.

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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. 'Southern India by Rail' is rated as a physical level 2 tour. 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 the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing several steps, often without handrails.
- You will be getting on and off trains which may have a gap between the platform and the train

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

JOINING YOUR TOUR:

The tour is 16 days in duration including an overnight international flight in both directions as this is the most suitable 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 2 in Chennai and end the tour on Day 14 in Bangalore. 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 1-2: Arrive Chennai

Meals: D

Fly overnight to Chennai, where on arrival you will be met and transferred for 40 minutes to your hotel. You have the rest of the day at your leisure before meeting your fellow travellers for dinner.



Destination Information

Chennai – The capital city of the state of Tamil Nadu. It is a vibrant metropolis, renowned for its rich cultural heritage, historic landmarks, and thriving urban life. Chennai offers a diverse experience to its visitors, with beautiful beaches, bustling markets, and a mix of modern and traditional architecture.

Day 3: Explore Mahabalipuram

Meals: B, L, D

Embarking on a morning excursion to Kanchipuram and Mahabalipuram, we delve into the cultural richness of these historical gems. Exploring the ancient temples and intricately carved monuments, the journey offers a glimpse into the architectural marvels of Kanchipuram and the coastal charm of Mahabalipuram. Later, as the day unfolds, we drive back to Chennai, where the bustling cityscape awaits. Sightseeing today will last 3.5 hours.



Destination Information

Kanchipuram – Often referred to as the "City of a Thousand Temples," it is a historic town renowned for its centuries-old temples, and famous for its silk sarees, intricately woven with traditional designs.

Mahabalipuram - Renowned for its UNESCO World Heritage-listed monuments and rock-cut temples, Mahabalipuram is a significant archaeological and cultural site. The town's Shore Temple, Arjuna's Penance, and the Five Rathas are iconic landmarks showcasing exquisite Dravidian architecture.

Day 4: Travel to Tanjore

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast transfer to Chennai Station where you will board the Trichy-bound Tejas Express, for a 4hr journey to Trichy. On arrival you will transfer to the coach to continue 1 hour and 30 minutes' drive to Tanjore after a quick tour of Tanjore. Check into your hotel before dinner.

**Destination Information**

Tanjore – Officially known as Thanjavur, it's celebrated for its cultural and artistic heritage, and the Brihadeeswarar Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage site and a masterpiece of Dravidian architecture. The city is also famous for its traditional art forms, including Tanjore painting and Bharatanatyam dance.

Day 5: Travel to Madurai

Meals: B, L, D

Following breakfast, embark on a 04 hour drive to Madurai, taking a captivating detour through Chettinad. Explore a tile-making factory, step into traditional houses, and wander through the local market to absorb the essence of this unique region. Engage in a hands-on cooking lesson, immersing yourself in the flavours of Chettinad cuisine, culminating in a delightful lunch experience. Continue to Madurai, where upon arrival, you check into the hotel. As the evening unfolds, partake in the serene Arti Ceremony at the iconic Minakshi Temple, a spiritual and cultural spectacle. Sightseeing today lasts approx. 3 hours.

**Destination Information**

Chettinad – The Chettinad region is renowned for its spicy and flavorful cuisine, characterized by a unique blend of aromatic spices. The grand mansions, or “Chettinad mansions,” showcase an architectural style that combines traditional South Indian and colonial influences.

Madurai – Well known for its historical and cultural significance and dominated by the iconic Meenakshi Amman Temple. This city is a major pilgrimage centre, and its history is reflected in its ancient temples, traditional markets, and the imposing Thirumalai Nayaka Palace.

Day 6: Explore Madurai

Meals: B, L, D

Today you will enjoy a comprehensive sightseeing tour of Madurai. Explore the renowned Thirumalai Nayaka Palace, a historical marvel that echoes the grandeur of a bygone era. In the afternoon, immerse yourself in a delightful Food Trail Tour, savouring the diverse and flavoursome culinary offerings that Madurai has to offer. Indulge in a gastronomic journey through the city's streets, tasting local delicacies that reflect the rich cultural tapestry of this vibrant destination. Sightseeing will last 03 hours.



Destination Information

Thirumalai Nayaka Palace – Built in the 17th century by King Thirumalai Nayaka of the Nayaka dynasty, the palace is a remarkable example of Indo-Saracenic architecture. Its grandeur is evident in the massive pillars, intricate carvings, and large courtyards. The palace served as the residence of the Nayaka rulers and is known for its imposing structure and artistic detailing.

Day 7: Travel to Trivandrum

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast you will transfer to the railway station, where you will board the PJ TVC Express to Trivandrum. This journey takes approximately 6 hours and a packed lunch will be served onboard. On arrival in Trivandrum you will be transferred to your hotel. Later, delve into the spiritual ambiance of the city with a visit to the iconic Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple, a site of profound cultural and religious significance.



Destination Information

Trivandrum – The capital city of the state of Kerala. Trivandrum is home to historical landmarks such as the Padmanabhaswamy Temple, known for its intricate architecture and religious significance. The city also boasts museums, art galleries, and lush greenery.

Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple – A significant Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The temple is renowned for its intricate carvings and the sanctum sanctorum housing the deity in a reclining position on the divine serpent, Ananta. The temple is not only a place of worship but also holds historical and cultural importance. It gained international attention due to the immense wealth discovered in its vaults, making it one of the wealthiest religious institutions globally.

Day 8: Explore Kanyakumari

Meals: B, L, D

Today entails an excursion to Kanyakumari, where you can witness the enchanting confluence of the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Bay of Bengal. Explore the Vivekananda Rock Memorial and the Thiruvalluvar Statue, iconic landmarks that grace the southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent. Later, drive 3.5 hours back to Trivandrum. Sightseeing will last 03 hours today.



Destination Information

Vivekananda Rock Memorial – Built in honor of Swami Vivekananda, the renowned Hindu monk and spiritual leader. This memorial stands at the spot where Vivekananda is believed to have meditated in December 1892, seeking spiritual enlightenment.

Day 9: Kerala Backwaters

Meals: B, L, D

Following breakfast drive 4.5 hours to the Alleppey, where on arrival you will board the houseboat, commonly known as a “Kettuvallam”. Glide through the enchanting backwaters, surrounded by lush landscapes and swaying palm trees. The gentle lull of the water and the picturesque surroundings create a perfect setting for a peaceful night on board.

**Destination Information**

Alleppey – Known for its intricate network of backwaters, canals and lagoons and referred to as the “Venice of the East”.

Day 10: Travel to Cochin

Meals: B, L, D

Disembark this morning and drive 2 hours to Cochin, a city steeped in history and culture. Enjoy a city tour that visits notable landmarks, historical sites, and the vibrant local markets. In the evening, immerse yourself in the captivating world of Kathakali, a traditional dance form that combines intricate facial expressions, graceful movements, and vibrant costumes. Witnessing a Kathakali Dance Show is not just a performance; it's a journey into the rich cultural heritage of Kerala.

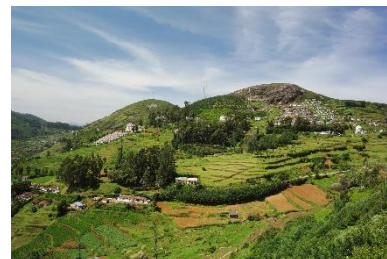
**Destination Information**

Cochin – A significant port city on the southwest coast, Cochin has a rich history and cultural heritage that reflects its diverse influences, including Indian, Portuguese, Dutch, and British. The city is characterized by its bustling seaport, historic landmarks, and a vibrant blend of modern and traditional elements.

Day 11: Travel to Ooty

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast transfer to the train station where you will embark on the SBC Intercity Express, travelling 3 and a half hours to Coimbatore. Upon reaching Coimbatore you will continue by coach to Ooty 3.5 hours away. Upon arrival check in at your hotel before dinner.



Destination Information

Coimbatore – Often referred to as the "Manchester of South India," and renowned for its industrial prowess, the city is a significant hub for textiles, engineering, and manufacturing. Coimbatore is situated on the banks of the Noyyal River and is surrounded by the picturesque Western Ghats.

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 12: Toy train to Coonoor

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast embark on a scenic and iconic journey from Ooty to Coonoor, winding your way through the picturesque Nilgiri Hills. The scenic ride offers breathtaking views of the lush landscapes, tea plantations, and charming villages along the way. This will take 1 hour and twenty minutes. Upon reaching Coonoor, explore the Botanical Gardens, before returning to Ooty.



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 13: Travel to Bangalore

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast transfer back to the rail station in Coimbatore where you will board the SBC Intercity Express bound for Bangalore. This journey will take 6 and a half hours, with a packed lunch served on board. On arrival in Bangalore transfer to your hotel before dinner.



Destination Information

Bangalore – Officially known as Bengaluru, this is the capital city of the Indian state of Karnataka. Recognized as the "Silicon Valley of India," Bangalore is a major technology and IT hub, hosting numerous multinational corporations and tech startups. The city is known for its vibrant culture, pleasant climate, and diverse culinary scene.

Day 14: Explore Bangalore

Meals: B, L, D

Today you will enjoy a city tour of Bangalore, exploring the dynamic blend of modernity and tradition that defines this vibrant city. Visit key landmarks, cultural sites, and noteworthy attractions that showcase the rich heritage and contemporary spirit of Bangalore. The afternoon is at leisure for you to explore. Sightseeing will last 3.5 hours.

**Destination Information**

Lalbagh Botanical Gardens - Founded in 1760 AD by Hyder Ali, and completed by his son Tipu Sultan, who named it as Lalbagh (Red Garden) due to the garden's countless red roses. The Lalbagh has a fine collection of rare trees and the glasshouse is said to have been inspired by London's Crystal Palace. It boasts one of the largest collections of tropical plants in India and attracts colourful avian life.

Cubbon Park - Rightfully called the 'Lungs of Bangalore'. Besides beautifully manicured flower beds and overall natural beauty, the park also has aesthetically designed buildings, statues of famous personalities and well-maintained pathways. This park is home to over 6,000 plants and trees.

Bull Temple - Also known as Nandi Temple, is famous for its large statue of the monolithic deity - Nandi or celestial bull, a marvellous work on granite.

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.

Day 15 - 16: Depart Bangalore

Meals: B

After breakfast you will be transferred to the airport for your overnight flight to Australia.



SOUTHERN INDIA BY RAIL 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 in 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 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:

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.

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.

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 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!

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 National Escort or Local Guides.

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, 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.

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: All of the trains included on our “Southern India by Rail” are day-time journeys in air conditioned chair carriages, with the exception of the toy train between Ooty to Coonoor where air-conditioning is not available.

Please take note:

- The train carriages are shared, so always be mindful of your personal belongings.
- Each train coach has toilet facilities, located at either end of the coach. One is western style, while the other is Indian style.
- We recommend you carry tissues/toilet paper and hand sanitizers.

Baggage on board trains: The maximum baggage measurement per passenger is 48 inches (123cm). If a piece of baggage exceeds any one of the dimensions, it must be booked and carried in the brake van rather than in the passengers' compartment. Luggage handling porters will be arranged while embarking and disembarking from the trains.

	CHENNAI - TRICHY TEJAS EXPRESS (22671)	TRICHY - TRIVANDRUM EXPRESS (22627)	COCHIN - COIMBATORE (12678)	OOTY - COONNOR - OOTY	COIMBATORE - BANGALURU CITY JUNCTION (12678)
Air-conditioned chair car	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Airline style seating (3:2 alignment)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Catering facilities	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Observation facilities (e.g. large windows)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Electrical outlets	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Baggage facilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Indian & Western Toilets	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

PORTERAGE:

Please be aware that portorage 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 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.

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. 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.

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 25th of March 2024 (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 November 1st 2024.

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.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 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: January 2024