



WORLD DISCOVERY  
— HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE —

## Classic South India



Madurai is one of the holiest of cities for Hindus

**DAY 1 - Depart UK.**

**DAY 2 - Arrive Chennai (Madras).**

On arrival in Chennai in the early hours of the morning you will be met by a representative of World Discovery outside immigration and customs. You will then be taken by private car direct to your hotel. The morning has been left free for sleep and relaxation. In the afternoon your guide will meet you at your hotel and take you on a brief sightseeing tour of South India's largest city, founded by the British in the 17th century. Visits will include **Fort St. George** (1666) and the interesting **St. Mary's Church**, the first English church built in India.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

**DAY 3 – Kanchipuram, Mamallapuram.**

A full day excursion to two of the most important religious sites of Southern India. You will start with a drive to Kanchipuram, one of the seven sacred cities of Hinduism, built in the 2nd century and often referred to as "The Golden City of a Thousand Temples". Particularly impressive is the towering **Ekamaresvara Temple** dedicated to Shiva. Drive to the coast for lunch before visiting the wonders of Mamallapuram, famed for its sculptured rock art including the breathtaking 'Descent of the Ganga' incorporating life-size figures of animals, gods and saints observing the sacred river's descent from the Himalaya. For many, the highlight of Mamallapuram is the elegant **Shore Temple**, best viewed in the soft light of the late afternoon. Return to Chennai by early evening.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.**

## DAY 4 - Fly to Bangalore. Continue to Mysore.

In the morning fly to Bangalore where you will be met and driven south to the city of Mysore, the former capital of the princely state famous for its sandalwood, silks and jasmine.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 5 - Mysore sightseeing.

In the morning visit the extravagant Indo-Saracenic **Maharajah's Palace**, a riot of domes, arches, carved pillars and marble floors which contains a wealth of treasures including the jewel-encrusted Golden Throne. Afterwards drive through the wide boulevards of this well-planned city and up the winding road to Chamundi Hill to see the enormous Nandi Bull, carved in 1659 from black granite. The afternoon is at leisure.

**Meals Included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 6 - Mysore sightseeing (continued).

Outside the city, to the east, can be found the exquisite **Somnathpur Temple**, one of the best preserved of the many Hoysala-style temples in this region. The stone-carved friezes on the temple's exterior, including stories from the Hindu epics, are particularly impressive. Continue through attractive scenery to the summer palace of Tipu Sultan at **Srirangapatnam**. Tipu Sultan, the 'Tiger of Mysore' was a local ruler who challenged the authority of the British in the late 18th century and inflicted two defeats on the armies of the East India Company before being defeated and killed in 1799, in a battle that established the reputation of the British colonel Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington. The afternoon is free.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 7 - Drive to 'Ooty'.

Your journey today will take you up into the cool air of the Nilgiri Hills to reach the old British hill station of **Ootacamund**, better known as 'Ooty'. Located at 2,286m/7,500ft, Ooty was a summer retreat from the heat of the southern plains for the government officials of the Madras Residency, and also attracted coffee and tea planters from the early 19th century onwards.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 8 - Ooty.

Ooty has grown considerably since British times but nostalgic vestiges of the past can still be discovered. This morning you will visit the **Botanical Gardens**, containing over 1,000 varieties of plant, shrub and tree including orchids, ferns and medicinal plants. **St. Stephen's Church**, dating from the 1820s, retains the atmosphere of a vanished way of life. The afternoon is free. Worth experiencing is the delightful narrow gauge steam Mountain Railway, opened in 1899, which travels between Ooty and the smaller hill station of Coonoor.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 9 - Drive to Cochin.

A long drive today brings you to the state of Kerala and the port of Cochin.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.**

## DAY 10 - Cochin.

Cochin is one of the most charming of India's cities, set picturesquely overlooking Lake Vembanad, separated by a narrow island from the Arabian Sea. This strategic port has been fought over by the Arabs, British, Chinese, Dutch, and Portuguese, each of which has left

indelible marks on the city's history. This morning take a tour of Fort Cochin (Kochi), the oldest part of the city, visiting the Dutch-style **Mattancherry Palace**, now a museum, the 16th century **Church of St Francis**, the market area and the distinctive **Chinese fishing nets** that line the entrance to the harbour. The afternoon is at leisure.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

### DAY 11 - Drive to Alleppey.

Drive south from Cochin into the famous backwaters of Kerala. Check into your hotel and in the afternoon enjoy a relaxing cruise through the lush tropical channels and lagoons, lined by palm trees. From the boat you will see papaya, mangoes, jack fruit and tapioca growing and you should witness the everyday activities along the waterways - coir making, rice-growing, fishing and the constant traffic of dugout canoes along the channels.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

### DAY 12 – By boat and road to Lake Periyar.

A further cruise this morning will bring you the **Coconut Lagoon**, where you will have lunch before transferring by boat to Kumarakom. Your driver will be waiting for you and will drive you past the plantations and spice gardens of the Kerala countryside to reach Lake Periyar and the adjoining **Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary**. Your hotel is located in Thekkady, close to the entrance to the sanctuary.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.**

### DAY 13 - Boat ride on Lake Periyar.

An early rise to enjoy a boat ride on Lake Periyar. Although Periyar is officially a 'Project Tiger' reserve, it is very rare to see these magnificent beasts, but you will see lots of birds (there are some 246 species here), bisons, wild boars and deer, and there are frequently herds of elephants at the water's edge. In the afternoon drive to Madurai.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

### DAY 14 - Madurai.

One of India's most holy cities for more than 2,500 years, Madurai attracts thousands of Hindu pilgrims each day to its many temples, none more famous than the huge **Meenakshi Temple** with its beautiful 16th century 'Hall of a Thousand Pillars'. The complex is alive with pilgrims and traders, its bazaars abounding in spices and temple offerings. Musicians perform beneath the granite arches and a colourful temple elephant stands unmoved by the hubbub all around. At the centre of the complex is the Golden Lotus tank in which are reflected some of the 9 towering *gopurams*, with their multi-coloured stucco images of gods, goddesses and animals which are renewed and repainted every 12 years. You will also visit the Thirumalai Nayaka Palace, built in 1636 in the Indo-Mughal style, with its impressive Central Hall where musicians and dancers used to entertain the ruler and his guests. The afternoon is at leisure.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

### DAY 15 – Fly back to Chennai.

In the morning fly back to Chennai and return to your first hotel. The rest of the day is free until your departure after midnight to the airport.

**Meals included: Full breakfast**

### DAY 16 – Depart for home.

Private transfer to the airport for your international flight home.