

Kerala & Tamil Nadu Cultural Trail

Day 01: Cochin-Poothotta Village (01 Hour Drive)

After an early breakfast, drive to a serene backwater island village-Poothotta for an exclusive experience which is a part of our Community Based Responsible Tourism. On arrival at the other side of the island, the local host along with a guide will receive you to cross the river in a canoe. Further you will be taken through some breath taking narrow canals and village activities like coir making. You will be offered a home cooked meal by the local family



This is an exclusive experience offered to our travellers as a part of our community support initiative and the economic benefits go to the host family which eventually support the local circular economy and sustainable living.

Afternoon, drive back to Cochin for a guided sightseeing covering the historic monuments and cultural heritage at Mattancherry. Highlights will be Dutch Palace, Jewish Synagogue & Jew Town. Evening watch a live Kathakali Dance Performance at a local theatre. Overnight at Hotel.



Day 02: Cochin-Alleppey Houseboat (1.5 Hours drive)

After a leisurely breakfast, drive to Alleppey to board your exclusive Houseboat for a cruise through the Vembanad Lake followed by overnight stay on board. Your meals will be freshly cooked and served on board. Overnight stay on board Houseboat.

Houseboat in Kerala backwaters was one of the most community oriented project in tourism as this industry created a huge employment opportunity for the local people. The traditional culinary heritage is being conserved and sustained to offer the regional Alleppey/Kuttanadan cuisine on board the Houseboat. The interesting part is that all cooks on Houseboats are men. Houseboat also gives an opportunity to the local fishermen and other vendors to sell their products. Even when the local farmers had many climatic chaos like floods which resulted in heavy crop loss, at least the availability of employment to many on Houseboats was a great boon to the local community. Two consecutive floods followed by the Pandemic have made the living in this region a real livelihood issue. During your cruise, you may see the new houses coming up which are all built on raised pillars in fear of floods during Monsoon. As the crew are from the local community, with proper training, now they are taking a special interest on keeping the waters clean and garbage free.



Day 03: Alleppey- Periyar (4.5 Hours Drive)

After breakfast on board, drive to Periyar, a destination known for Periyar Tiger Reserve and sprawling spice farms. On arrival, check into your hotel. Afternoon go for a guided spice farm visit. Evening watch a live martial art show -Kalaripayattu at a local theatre. Overnight at Hotel

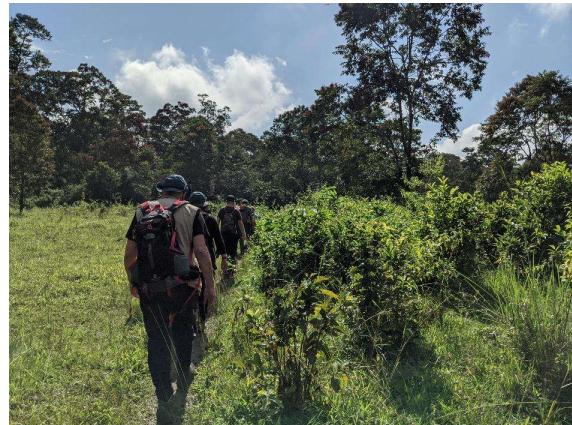


Day 04: Periyar-Guided Walking Safari in the Sanctuary



Full day trekking in the Sanctuary. It will be a guided program by the forest Department and there are chances of closure of the Sanctuary between April & June due to the fear of wild fire /heavy rains . At 0730 AM we have to report at starting point .Once you reach the starting point ,you will finish the registration formalities and collect leech socks(depending on the season), packed light breakfast & a proper hot lunch etc. The program is from 8 AM till 4.30-5 PM. This will be a nice program to watch possible wildlife in the sanctuary. Only physically fit travellers can do this full activity. Children below 13 years are not allowed to do the program. Packed breakfast and lunch are a part of the package. The hike is through plain forest scapes with 12 km duration. According to the availability, there may be a bamboo raft also in between.Evening return to your hotel. Overnight at hotel.

This is one of Kerala's first Responsible Tourism Programs as a part of rehabilitating the tribal people who lived inside the Sanctuary and sometimes Poachers and hunters. With the help of an Eco Development Society (EDS),these people are now the guards of the forest for the best conservation and the best guides for tourists because they know the forest very well including the movement of wild animals. The revenue from these programs help the Government to give back to the Community to enable them to have decent living.



Day 05: Periyar – Madurai (3.5 Hours Drive)

After breakfast, drive to Madurai, the temple gateway of South India. On arrival, check into your hotel. At 5.30 PM, you will be picked up for a food tour of Madurai and will be dropped back to hotel by 9 PM. Overnight at hotel.

“Foodies Day Out” tour offers you a perspective of MADURAI entirely through the eyes of a FOODIE, very different from that of a normal tourists view. We take you to spots that you cannot find on the internet or guide book. We travel across the city to taste the best culinary dishes the city has to offer. We drive around in a car to eat the best signature dishes of our local eateries and also walk along the streets to indulge ourselves in uninhibited eating spree. This tour offers exquisite vegetarian and non-vegetarian fare. It can be customized to suit your food preferences.

Day 06: Madurai

Full day guided tour of Madurai covering Meenakshi Temple, Thirumalai Nayak Palace, Flower market, Tailor street etc. Evening for free. If you wish to visit Meenakshi Temple for watching closing ceremony, you may do this on their own taking a tuk tuk without guide. The reason for not including the visit in the itinerary is due to the logistic issues as the timings of the ceremony is unpredictable. Overnight at hotel

Meenakshi Temple - In the **Ashta Shakti Mandapam** inside the temple, the sculpted pillars tell the story of the beautiful princess of Madurai and her marriage to Lord Siva. The pillars of the Mandapam



are **decorated with** scenes from the wedding of Meenakshi and Sundareswarar. The life of Madurai revolves around the Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple. This magnificently carved temple is the main attraction of Madurai and its huge Gopurams towers over the city. Meenakshi temple has a thousand pillared 'Mandapam'. Precisely there are 985 pillars and each of them is delicately and exquisitely carved. Among these are the musical pillars, which produce music when tapped. Surprisingly, these musical pillars are carved out of a single granite rock. The temple has been a hub of Tamil culture and



has been sponsoring literature, art, music, and dance in the region for a long time.

Day 07: Madurai-Tanjore-Kumbakonam (5.5 Hours)

After an early breakfast at the hotel, drive to Tanjore. Enroute you may stop at Srirangam temple for a photo stop. After a short lunch/tea/coffee break at Tanjore, you will do a guided tour of the Big Temple (Brihadeeswara Temple) in Tanjore. Later continue drive to Kumbakonam to check into your hotel. Overnight at your hotel



Thanjavur rose to the glory during the later Chola reign between the 10th and 14th Centuries and became a centre of learning and culture. Thanjavur is still the centre of all the classical arts and music. The Big Temple and the other famous temples in the district are known all over the world. It is the headquarters of Thanjavur district, the 'Rice Bowl' of Tamil Nadu. Thanjavur is also famous for its distinctive art style, which is usually a combination of raised and painted surfaces. Tanjore paintings are deeply rooted in tradition and still innovative within limits. This art is sacred and dedicated.

Day 08 :Gangaikondacholapuram-Darasuram-Kumbakonam

Early morning , you may visit Darasuram Vegetable market which is supposed to be the biggest vegetable market in South India. Later after breakfast at the hotel, drive to Gangaikondacholapuram (UNESCO temple) to visit the amazing architectural Marvel. Later visit Darasuram Iravadeeswarar Temple (UNESCO Monument). Overnight stay at Kumbakonam.



Day 09: Kumbakonam-Pondicherry (3.5 Hour)

After breakfast, drive to Pondicherry, which still carries a French flavour to its life and decor. On arrival, check into your hotel. Afternoon , go for a guided tour of Pondicherry . Overnight at the Hotel



The old town of Pondicherry has a unique charm and the French Quarter is unique in its cleanliness, architecture, discipline etc. To experience the spirit of Pondicherry, its essential to walk through the old town and closely observe the nature of its architectural traditions. Its interesting to note that if someone wants an old building to be restored in Pondicherry, the local authorities ask for the approval of INTACH on priority. This is interesting and we could see how naturally those old buildings were restored in French style. One will walk through Town Hall (Mairie/Hotel de Ville), Notre Dame des Anges Church, Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, Cluny Embroidery centre, Alliance Francaise, INTACH Heritage Centre for Exhibitions, Lycees Francaise and lot more.

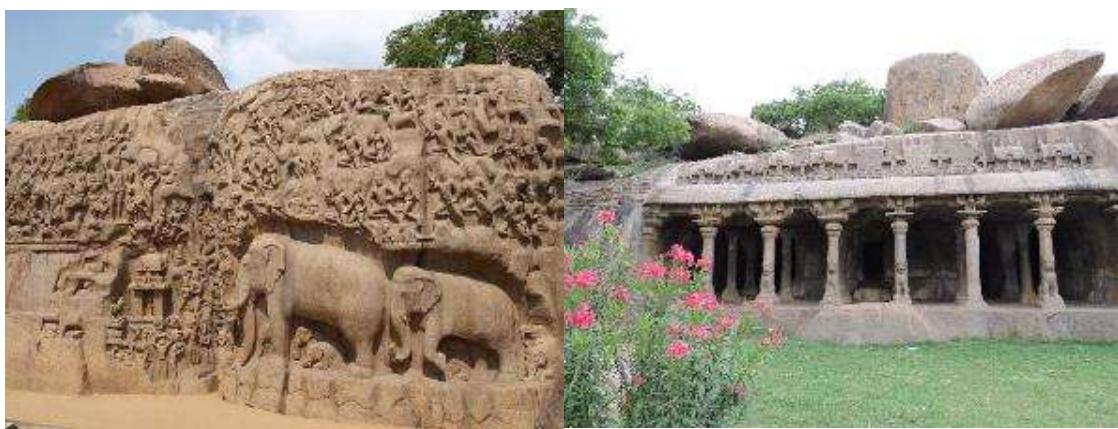
The beach close to the French quarter is landscaped with wide stone paved pathways and the vehicular traffic is banned from 6 PM till 7.30 AM. It is strictly maintained and the pedestrians enjoy their walk in the evening. Many of the old heritage buildings are now getting converted to hotels and guest houses. All kinds of restaurants with international cuisines are seen everywhere. A walk through the market place on M G Road is also amazing.

Day 10: Pondicherry- Mahabalipuram (2 Hours)

After a relaxing breakfast, drive to Mahabalipuram to check into your resort on the beach. Afternoon, guided sightseeing of Mahabalipuram to explore the heritage of Mahabalipuram temples, built in 7th & 8th century AD which are today the sight of several antique sculptural marvels. Overnight stay at the Resort.

Mahabalipuram has a significant role in the history and architecture of India which gives a major role for the archaeological enthusiasts. This is the only place in India where we have Cave Architecture, Monolithic Architecture and Structural Architecture still existing simultaneously. Also the long stretch of clean beach will give one a peaceful relaxation in Mahabalipuram.

Mahabalipuram - It is among the most outstanding examples of Pallava art and architecture. The monuments are floodlit at night and so it is possible to enjoy their beauty even after sunset. Arjuna's Penance - This skillfully carved rock is the largest bas relief in the world. There are nine rock cut cave temples. The Mahishasuramardhini cave, contrasting the goddess fighting a demon on one side, and Lord Vishnu's cosmic sleep on the other, is a particularly remarkable one. Five Rathas - These rock-cut temples are rated as excellent examples of Pallava art. Shaped in different styles, the rathas are supposed to have been scooped out of a single rock formation.



Day 11: Mahabalipuram-Kanchipuram- Mahabalipuram (2 Hours one way)

After an early breakfast, by 8 AM, drive to Kanchipuram, the city of thousand temples. Half day guided tour of Kanchipuram. Afternoon, return to Mahabalipuram for overnight stay.



Kanchipuram - Kanchipuram, an ancient city known as “**the city of thousand temples**”, is one of the seven most sacred pilgrim centres for the Hindus. There now remain about 126 temples and a few more in its outskirts. Today, apart from its temples, this small town is also known for its thriving handloom industry.

Ekambaranath Temple, also known as Ekambareswarar Temple - The eleven-storey structure which is adorned with beautiful Stucco Figures is one of the tall temple towers in South India. The ancient **mango tree** in the courtyard inside the temple is revered by childless couples. They faithfully tie small cradles to the branches of the tree and leave with the hope that their desire for an offspring will be fulfilled. Also visit Kailasanatha Temple and Varadaja Temple.



Day 12: Mahabalipuram

Full day at leisure on the beach. Overnight at your Resort.

Day 13: Chennai Departure (1 Hour Drive)

Today, you will be transferred to Chennai (MAA) International airport to board your flight home.

Tour Cost Deluxe : USD 1975 Per Pax on Double Sharing

Accommodations Suggested:

Cochin:Fort House www.hotelforthouse.com

Houseboat:Evergreen www.evergreen-kerala.com

Periyar:Green Forest www.abadhotels.com

Madurai:Fortune Pandiyan www.fortunehotels.in

Kumbakonam:Indeco www.indecohotels.com

Pondicherry:Shenbaga www.hotelshenbaga.com

Mahabalipuram:Ideal Beach www.idealresort.com

Tour Cost Premium:USD 2840 Per Person on Double Sharing basis

Accommodations Suggested:

Cochin:Fragrant Nature www.fragrantnature.com

Houseboat:Xandari Riverscapes www.xandari.com

Periyar:Spice Village www.cghearth.com

Madurai:Grand Madurai www.grthotels.com

Kumbakonam:Mantrakoodam www.cghearth.com

Pondicherry:Villa Shanti www.lavillashanti.com

Mahabalipuram:Radisson Blu Temple Bay www.radissonblu.com

Tour Cost Includes:

- 12 Nights stay as above
- Daily breakfast at hotels
- All meals on Houseboat
- Village Backwater Canoe tour with lunch
- Kathakali show at Cochin
- English speaking local guides at Cochin, Periyar, Madurai,Tanjore, Kumbakonam,Pondicherry,Mahabalipuram & Kanchipuram
- Guided spice farm visit at Periyar
- Martial Arts show at Periyar

- Guided full day walking safari at Periyar National Park with packed breakfast & lunch
- Foodies Day Out walking Food Tour in Madurai
- Exclusive Aircon SUV for transfers and sightseeing
- All entrance fees
- All Taxes

PS:The price given is based on 02 Pax travelling on Double/Twin sharing basis.We will be happy to customise the costing according to the number of person on request.