

Magical Kerala

12 days



EXPLORATOURS
est 1947

Highlights

Muziris Tour
Spice Plantation Tour
Folk Music Trail at Sopanam school
Night Fishing in the Lake
Kathakali Dance show in Cochin
Tea Plantation trek and Tea factory visit
Ethnic tour of Fort Kochi
Hills & Plantations
Overnight Cruise on the Backwaters

Program

Day 01 - Airport - Kochi
Day 02 - Kochi
Day 03 - Cheurthuruthy
Day 04 - Cheurthuruthy
Day 05 - Munnar
Day 06 - Munnar
Day 07 - Thekkady
Day 08 - Thekkady
Day 09 - Kumarakom
Day 10 - Kumarakom
Day 11 - Kochi
Day 12 - Departure

Day 01

(COCHIN Arrival)

On arrival meet and assistance at the airport, then proceed to your hotel and check-in. Rest of the day free in this colonial town. Enjoy a cultural evening at Greenix Village Cultural Center and discover the famous dance drama of Kerala, the "Kathakali" show. This dance can be characterized by grotesque gesticulations, amazing costumes and very extensive make-up. The stories are mostly taken from the epics Mahabharatha and Ramayana. Overnight stay.

Day 02

(COCHIN – Ethnic Tour)

Breakfast at the hotel. Today you will experience the real local life of Cochin during an half-day Ethnic tour – start with the visit of the famous Chinese Fishing Nets of Cochin. The huge cantilevered Chinese fishing nets that droop towards the waters like over-sized hammocks have become a hallmark that represents Fort Kochi on every postcard... Next visit is at the St. Francis CSI Church, the oldest European church in India built in 1503, where the Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama was originally buried and pass by the finest Santa cruz Basilica. Take a tuk tuk – the most popular mode of transport among the localities, go along with your local

tour and stop at the Dhobi Khana (laundry station), once throbbing with activity, it is now a picture of slow extinction. Continue through the small streets of Mattanchery, and arrive at the Fruit market on Palace road where locals get a variety of fresh and organic produces at bargains prices. Don't miss a stop at the Spice Market, where exotic odors of the finest ginger, cloves, cardamom, turmeric and pepper emanate from the spice warehouses lining the street. Make a pause and have one "meter tea" at one of the tea stalls. There is now an opportunity to interact with a Brahmin Family. The Brahmin are the highest of the four Hindu castes of priests and scholars of Vedic literature, their traditional occupation is to conduct rites at marriages, births and other auspicious occasions. Then you will be invited to get squiggly lines drawn on your hands... This ritual called Mehndi arts holds plenty of cultural significance in Indian traditions and is one of the most important ritual during the wedding ceremonies. Visit the Jewish Synagogue at the heart of what is locally called the Jew Town, and finally stop at the Dutch Palace with its beautiful mural paintings from the 17th century. Rest of the day free at leisure. Overnight stay at the hotel.

Day 03

(COCHIN – CHENDAMANGALAM – CHERUTHURUTHY (80 km / 3 hrs))

Today proceed with a guided Muziris Tour, an introduction to the many faiths and cultures of the Malabar Coast. Muziris is the name of an ancient port city on the Kerala coast. Enriched by trade contacts, Muziris became a melting pot of world cultures. Start your visit with the Palace Paliyam Kovilakam. Its architectural style is a mixture of Dutch and Kerala styles. Then visit of the Old synagogue of the Malabar Jews in Chennamangalam. Follow your journey with a Kudumbasree's visit program in Chendamangalam village. Your journey is conducted by Kudumbasree, a women's self-help group empowered to promote gender equity and communal harmony through self-sustainability. Started in 1998, their mission is to eradicate poverty in rural areas through teaching women skills like organic farming, weaving and handicrafts. You will enjoy a Cooking session with them before

feasting with a Sadhya, a vegetarian meal served on banana leaves. Finally, your guide will accompany you to the Pattanam Museum located at the place where recent archaeological excavations have unearthed evidence of early Roman trade with India. Return to your hotel or follow toward your next destination. Later proceed to Cheruthuruthy, this quaint village is the seat of Kerala Kalamandalam renowned for its traditional cultural training. Check-in at your hotel for your rest of the day free. Overnight stay.

Day 04

(CHERUTHURUTHY Crafts and Arts)

After breakfast, proceed to Ainkalam, on the way you stop at a Pottery workshop. Enjoy an interactive session with these skilled artisans. Continue your drive to Pulluvanpaattu and get a chance to assist at a Folk song's performance. Follow your Musical trail, known locally as "Vadya Parichayam" to the Sopanam Panchavadyam musical school, where you will enjoy a vegetarian lunch. Later observe an introduction of musical instruments used in temples, conducted by artists and students. This program includes a short performance demonstrating the use of these traditional instruments. Return to your hotel. Overnight at hotel.

Day 05

(CHERUTHURUTHY – MUNNAR (185 km / 4.5 hrs))

After breakfast and check-out, proceed for 'A Day with the Masters'. A pilgrimage to the most sacred temple of arts, with a unique menu of presentations that brings out the grandeur of the Kerala Kalamandalam, the traditional Temple Theatre. Get an audio-visual lecture followed by an exhibition of 10-15 Kalaris (teaching classes) such as Classical dances – Make-up, Vocal music, Percussion instruments; Carnatic classical Music, etc... Then observe a presentation on Kerala Mural Painting, a visit of the Art gallery to see costumes, masks and jewellery and finally have a glimpse of the life of the poet laureate Vallathol Narayana Menon, founder of Kalamandalam. Proceed to Munnar, South India's largest tea-growing region, passing through the rolling hills and sculpted tea gardens. On

arrival check-in at your hotel for your overnight stay.

Day 06

(MUNNAR)

After your breakfast, go on a Half-day trekking passing through the rolling hills and sculpted Tea gardens of Munnar (Easy trek / duration 2-3 hrs). You will be transferred by car to the Harrisons Tea Factory. After a visit of the factory and the Tea Museum, go trekking passing through the Plantations. Enjoy a Picnic lunch. Finally drive back to your hotel. On your way head to Srishti TATA project for a visit. This project is a venture of Tata Global Beverages for the rehabilitation of the differently abled. Enjoy some shopping time in this community centre and get some Strawberry jam (handmade), handmade paper or clothing naturally dyed on site. Dinner & Overnight stay.

Day 07

(MUNNAR - THEKKADY (120 km / 3.5 hrs))

After your breakfast at your hotel and check-out, take a beautiful drive to Thekkady, down to the green mountains of the Nilgiris, rubber, coffee and cardamom plantations will follow. Arrive and check in at the hotel. Later the day go on a spice plantation tour you can smell and taste almost all varieties of Spices available. Due its high altitude Thekkady is fertile to plants. Rest Of the day Free- Indulge in resort activities OPTIONAL, take a Plantation Jeep Safari into the tropical fields of the Cardamon Hill reserve where you can touch, smell and taste almost all the spices seen worldwide. overnight stay

Day 08

(THEKKADY)

After your breakfast. Free time, indulge in Resort activities. One can opt for for Jungle treks or a cruising on Lake Periyar – both with possibilities see wild life – Deers, wild boars, Bison, Elephant and Lots of Birds. OPTIONAL: enjoy a full day in the lap of the high range. You will be directed deep into the inner settlements of the village Kovilamala. Kovilamala is inhabited by the tribal community Mannan. The Mannan community has unique culture and rituals. They have a

kingdom at Kovilamala with an elected tribal king. The most current king is Raman Raja Mannan who was elected in March 2012. Take the unique opportunity to have a lunch in the Kings house and observe some insights into the world of nature people. After this royal immersion, next jeep drive to the nearby spot known as Anchuruli, famous for its waterfall and then to Anjuruli, a picturesque secret fishing spot offering serene views of semi evergreen forest. If possible, with special permission you can visit another traditional Mannan tribal settlement nearby. After visiting these mesmerizing places, you drive back to the Kovilamala settlement and experience a rare moment of a tribal art dance known as “Koothu” performed at the King’s house by the Mannan people. Return to our hotel by the evening.

Day 09

(THEKKADY - KUMARAKOM (120 km / 3.5 hrs))

After your breakfast and chek-out, drive to Kumarakom. This city slumbers on the banks of the famous Vembanad Lake, with its majestic canals, streams and distributaries along its banks, weave an intricate and enchantingly beautiful web. The attached bird sanctuary is an ornithologist's paradise and a favourite haunt of migratory birds. Check-in at your hotel. Rest of the afternoon free amidst coconut groves and views of the backwaters. This evening. proceed to the surroundings villages with your knowledgeable guide and experience a Traditional canoe ride accompanied with a local fisherman. Learn the different typical methods of fishing and engage in night fishing with your guide. You can have your pick from fishing with nets, angling and handpicking of clams. Return to your hotel for your overnight.

Day 10

(KUMARAKOM)

Breakfast at the hotel. Day free to indulge in Resort activities or explore various activities prganised around. Canoe Rides, Village walks, sunset cruises or a Rejuvenating Ayurveda Massage (Payable locally) OPTIONAL: - Aymanam Village, home of Arundhathi Roy’s novel ‘The God of Small Things’. Start your local immersion with a ride on

a Traditional canoe cruise through the narrow, winding canals and catch the scenic daily life of the bordering houses. Follow with a walk in the heart of this typical Kuttanad village surrounded by paddy fields and identify the snake’s abodes, sacred to earliest habitants. Be invited to a Kathakali master house who will introduce you to this traditional theatre form, which adapts styles of ancient Sanskrit with visual presentations of human expressions. There, take an opportunity to share a homemade family lunch with delicious blend of curries fish or meat with rice. This afternoon, proceed to the surroundings Backwater villages with your guide and go watch maximum number of the local birdlife. The close by Vembanad lake attracts waterfowl, cuckoo, owl, egret, heron and the water duck, as well as the migratory Siberian cranes. Learn with your guide how to recognized moves and chanting sounds of each bird species. Later drive back to your hotel for your overnight stay.

Day 11

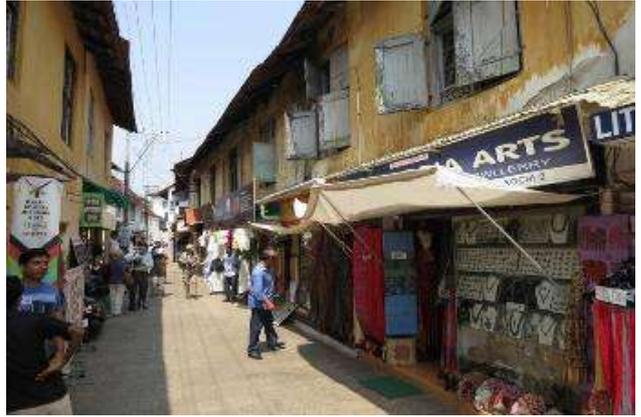
(KUMARAKOM - ALLEPPEY (40 km / 1.5 hrs))

Breakfast, check-out from hotel and. By Midday proceed to the Houseboat for your Backwaters cruise. These boats are a reworked version of kettuvallams of olden times and made out of huge planks of Jack wood, joined with coir from Coconut shells. These original kettuvallams were once used to carry tons of rice and spices. They are today converted into comfortable floating accommodation offering enchanting cruises through the backwaters. Cruise through the palm fringed canals enjoying the beauty of rural village life. The trip continues through a wonderful area of the lush green vegetation. Disembark and drive to cochin for overnight stay at Airport Hotel After your breakfast at your hotel and check-out, take a beautiful drive to

Day 12

(Departure– COCHIN International Airport (45 km / 1.5 hrs))

Breakfast at the hotel and check-out. Transfer to Cochin international Airport on time to connect your flight back home.



Inclusions

Flights from London to Cochin and back (flight itinerary to be provided separately)
Evening guided Bird watching in Kumarakom
Transportation by Chauffeur driven air-conditioned Vehicle as per Itinerary
Spice Plantation tour in Thekkady
Breakfast at all places except Day cruise on the Backwaters with lunch on board in the house boat
Entrance charges at the monuments as covered in the Itinerary
Tea Plantation Trekking and Tea factory visit - Guided
Musical Trail in with lunch at Sopanam Panchavadyam musical school
Guided Ethnic tour of Cochin
All currently applicable taxes
Accommodation on twin sharing basis at all hotels mentioned or similar
Ticket for the Kathakali Dance show in Cochin
Assistance on arrival and departure
Guided visit Muziris tour and lunch with Kudumbasree's organisation

Exclusions

Early Check in & Late check-out cost
Any other items not covered under inclusions
Any optional activities suggested in the itinerary
International/Domestic flight charges, Insurance, If any
Expenses of personal nature such as porterage, laundry, telephones, tipping

Notes:

Terms and conditions apply
Travel insurance is mandatory to participate in the tour

