



TEA PLANTATION IN MUNNAR

INDIA | Gardens, Temples, Parks, Palaces, Mountains, & the Arabian Sea

14 DAYS from \$6,180 | Choose your dates | Best season to travel: OCT–MID-DEC

PREPARE for the sensory overload that is southern India as you explore its extravagant gardens, redolent spice plantations, multicultural ports, and cool hill stations. You'll wander through bowers of sweet-smelling red, pink, yellow, purple, and green roses. Behold elaborate temples and Victorian mansions. Listen to mesmerizing raga music, tinkling fountains, and delightful birdsong. Cruise the serene Kerala backwaters. And seek out the rare Bengal tiger in the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary. It's a world whose cultural treasures come framed in exotic natural splendor.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore the world-famous Vrindavan Gardens, arrayed across three terraces next to a dam, with sparkling musical fountains.
- Visit the 18th-century "red garden," Lal Bagh, with India's largest collection of tropical plants and a stunning glasshouse.
- See the Botanical Gardens of Ooty and the nearby Rose Garden, whose 2,800 cultivars include rare black and green roses.
- Encounter the Dutch, Portuguese, and Jewish heritage of Kochi (Cochin), the famous spice trading port.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Specialist guide
- Private transportation
- Accommodations
- Activities
- Meals
- Beverages with meals
- Bottled water on the bus
- Carbon offsetting



OOTY GARDENS BY ADAM JONES



ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

Day 1 | **Bangalore**

Upon arrival, after clearing customs and collecting your luggage, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Bangalore is located 1,000 meters above sea level, and is considered one of the most 'happening' places in India. Bangalore was founded by Kempe Gowda, a chieftain of the Vijayanagar Empire, around the 16th century. He built four towers in four directions to specify its boundaries. However, Bangalore has far exceeded these limits since. The multifaceted capital city of Karnataka, dotted with modern marvels, lush boulevards, historical monuments, and bustling shopping plazas, Bangalore is aptly called the Silicon Valley of India. It is the fifth largest city in India, and is the perfect blend of natural beauty and man-made marvels of architecture and technology. Blessed with a salubrious climate and dotted with beautiful parks, its tree-lined avenues, its trendy, yuppie downtown, and the software flood, Bangalore truly offers one a picture of striking contrasts. *Overnight at The Lalit/Deluxe*

Day 2 | **Bangalore**

After breakfast proceed for a full day sightseeing tour of Bangalore, visiting the Lal Bagh which has a variety of old trees, fountains, lotus pools, terraces and an assortment of tropical and sub-tropical herbs. Also see the government buildings, the Maharajas Palace, and Cubbon Park. The rich and beautiful Lal Bagh Botanical Garden is a pleasant 240 acres park in the southern suburbs of Bangalore. One of the many gardens in the city, Lal Bagh is the most famous garden in Bangalore. It derives its name from the profusion of Red roses, which bloom here. Rulers of Mysore laid this garden. Haider Ali started building this garden in 1760 but his son Tipu Sultan completed it. The Lal Bagh rock is one of the oldest rock formations in India and is believed to be 3000 million years old. The garden contains artistically laid out expansive lawns, flowerbeds, fountains, and a rare and valuable collection of tropical plants. The garden is spread in a sprawling area and houses exotic tropical and sub-tropical species. Expect to see species such as *Araucaria* spp.,

Averrhoa bilimbi, Brownea grandiceps, Castanospermum australe, Eriobotrya japonica, Swietenia mahagoni; indigenous Bombax ceiba, Cassia fistula, and Dillenia indica. Some of the flora and fauna have been brought from Italy, Persia, and other European countries, many of which are only found in the garden. Cubbon Park, located in front of Vidhana Soudha, stretches over an area of about 300 acres. The garden was created by Lord Cubbon in 1864 and has beautiful expansive lawns and flowering trees. *Overnight at The Lalit/Deluxe (BLD)*

Day 3 | **Mysore**

After breakfast you will travel to Mysore, en-route visiting Srirangapatnam, once the capital of Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan. The temple of Lord Srirangapatnam is said to have been built by the Chieftain Thirumalaiah in 894. This afternoon you will be given a tour of the city. Visit the Palace of the Maharaja built in 1911-12. The Palace is of harmonious syntheses of the Hindu and saracenic style of architecture with archways, dome turrets, colonnades, and sculptures, which are magnificent. Visit the Art Gallery, then drive up to Chamundi Hill to see the Chamundeshwari Temple and a panoramic view of Mysore. This evening visit the world famous Vrindavan Gardens on the terrace of the Krishna Raja Sagar Dam, near the Mysore City. Across the river Cauvery is the meticulously planned garden. It was built in 1932 during the rule of Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, who was a great lover of gardens and parks. The then Dewan or Prime Minister of the Maharaja, Sir Mirza Ismail, designed the enchanting garden. The Krishna Raja Sagar Dam is one of the earliest dams built in the country in 1932 by the renowned engineer statesman, Sir M. Visveshwaraya, during the reign of Krishna Raja Wodeyar. Just below the dam, the beautiful gardens are laid on either side of big artificial lakes named the South-North Yards. You will find *Ficus* trees, *Duranta plumaria*, *Euphorbia* spp., *celosia*, and *Bougainvillea* spp. The musical fountain is of special interest which presents a spectacular harmony of water, colors and music. There are varieties of fountains illuminated at night by colorful lights. Every evening the gardens come alive in a burst of dazzling colors and illumination when twirling and dancing fountains lend an atmosphere of enchantment to this fairyland. *Overnight at Hotel Metropole/Royal Wing Room (BLD)*

Day 4 | **Ooty**

After breakfast drive to Ooty and upon arrival check in at the hotel. Ooty, also known as Udhagamandalam, is the “Queen of hill stations” and the capital of the Nilgiris District. At an altitude of 2,240 meters above sea level, it is also known as Blue Mountains. The area is often a popular summer and weekend getaway, as its verdant vegetation, sprawling grasslands, gurgling streams, and miles of tea pastures are quite enticing. Once you have arrived and checked in to your hotel, you will have the remainder of the day to explore your new surroundings. *Overnight at Fernhill Palace/Suite (BLD)*

Day 5 | **Ooty**

Today you will visit the Government Botanical Gardens of Ooty. The gardens sprawl over 50 acres and lie on the lower slopes of Dodabetta peak, which is the highest point in Ooty. Marquis of Tweedale established these Ooty gardens in 1848. The Gardens have around a thousand species, both exotic and indigenous, including thirty species of eucalyptus, medicinal plants, and bonsai. The gardens are formally laid out with lily ponds and topiaries in the form of elephants with raised trunks. There is also a fossilized tree trunk, which is said to be 20 million years old. Visit the Rose Garden, with its collection of roses such as Miniature Roses, Ramblers, Hybrid Tea Roses, Yakimour, Polyanthas, Papagena, and Floribunda, and the Mini Gardens. *Overnight at Fernhill Palace/Suite (BLD)*

Day 6 | **Coimbatore**

This morning travel to Coimbatore. Upon arrival, take a sightseeing tour of the city including a visit to the Agriculture University. Continue on to visit the Temple of Perur Patteeswara Swamy. Built by King Karikala Cholan, the temple is known for the Swayambu Lingam, the idol dedicated to lord Shiva, and the Kanaka Saba (golden hall), with a gold-plated statue of Nataraja. *Overnight at Vivanta by Taj - Surya (BLD)*

Day 7 | **Coimbatore**

Today you will start with a visit to the Coimbatore Zoological Park and Conservation Center (CZPCC) in the foothills of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR). The reserve is a unique and threatened ecosystem in Western Ghats of India. This afternoon visit the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB). *Overnight at Vivanta by Taj - Surya (BLD)*

Day 8 | **Kochi**

This morning you will travel to Kochi. Upon arrival, check in at the hotel. Kochi, the commercial and industrial capital of Kerala, has one of the finest natural harbors on the Arabian Sea Coast. Ancient mariners from Arabia, China, Holland, Britain, and Portugal have all left their mark on this beautiful island city. Kochi was earlier known as Cochin, and has been a port of call for foreign traders from early times. Its cosmopolitan character is reflected in the buildings and structures representing different regions of the world. A city of peninsulas and islands, today it is Kerala’s commercial hub and prime tourist destination. It spreads across islands and promontories in a stunning location between the Arabian Sea and backwaters. You will have time in

the afternoon for exploration on your own. In the evening visit Kathkali Dance theatre for a live performance of the famous Kathkali Dance show. Kathakali is the traditional dance form of Kerala with very impressive facial expressions, hand gestures, and dance moves that are bound to leave you in splendor. *Overnight at CGH Brunton Boatyard/Standard Sea Facing Room (BLD)*

Day 9 | **Kochi**

After breakfast proceed for a sightseeing tour of Kochi. The tour begins with a visit to the Jewish Synagogue, built in 1568 by the prosperous Jewish trading community. The oldest synagogue in India, it was partially destroyed in the war of 1662 and was rebuilt by the Dutch. In the mid-18th century the clock tower was added and the floors paved with exquisite hand-painted blue willow tiles from China – no two tiles are alike. Continue on to the Dutch Palace, originally built by the Portuguese in the middle of the 16th century. The structure was taken over in 1663 by the Dutch, who added some improvements before presenting it to the Rajas of Cochin, who made further improvements. This palace is notable for some of the best mythological murals in India. Next stop will be St. Francis Church, the oldest European church in India, originally built in 1503. The Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama, died in Kochi in 1524 on his third visit to India, and his body was originally buried in St Francis Church, before his remains were returned to Lisbon 14 years later. Close by is the Santa Cruz Basilica, considered to be one of the finest and most impressive churches in India. While driving along the coast on today’s tour you will get to see the iconic Chinese fishing nets (Cheenavala) that are distinctly unique to this city. It is believed that traders from the court of the Chinese ruler Kublai Khan introduced these nets here. Oddly, these nets are found only in Kochi, not China! Many fishermen earn their livelihood by fishing using these massive nets, with a whole



KATHAKALI DANCE BY MANFRED SOMMER

stretch of the coast along Fort Kochi and Vypeen dotted with them. Your tour concludes with a visit to Fort Cochin - a small community in itself. Since it is a natural harbor and one of the most important trade centers in south of India, Kochi Fort of Kerala is one of the most important towns in the state. One can see a unique blend of Dutch and Portuguese influences in Fort Cochin, due to the rulers from these areas who occupied Cochin for many years. This afternoon take a cruise on the Cochin Harbor. *Overnight at CGH Brunton Boatyard/Standard Sea Facing Room (BLD)*

Day 10 | **Thekkady**

This morning after breakfast travel to Alleppey and take a backwater cruise on the Vembanad lake, passing through the small canals and witnessing the backwater beauty and village life of Kerala. Disembark at the Kottayam and drive to Thekkady. Thekkady, located in central Kerala, is a popular hill station and a wildlife center. This town, which is an important plantation center, conjures up images of elephants and unending chains of hills and spice scented plantations. In the Periyar Forest of Thekkady is one of the finest wildlife reserves of India. Spread



CRUISE ON VEMBANAD LAKE IN PERIYAR NATIONAL PARK

across the entire district are picturesque plantations and hill towns that hold immense opportunities for treks and mountain walks. The forest contains deciduous and semi evergreen trees like teak, rosewoods, terminalias, sandalwoods, *Jacarandas spp.*, mangoes, *Syzygium cumini*, tamarind, banyans, *Ficus religiosa*, *Plumeria spp.*, *Delonix regia*, *Pterocarpus marsupium*, bamboo, *Gloriosa spp.*, and the only South Indian conifer, *Nageia wallichiana*. The endemic flora includes *Habenaria periyarensis* and *Syzygium periyarensis*. The Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary offers a fairly good chance of seeing the great Indian tiger in its natural habitat. *Overnight at CGH Spice Village/Standard Villa (BLD)*

Day 11 | **Thekkady**

Early this morning enjoy a thrilling game viewing boat ride on the Lake Periyar. Later after breakfast, you will have a full day excursion to Kumliy, Murikkady, and Pandikuzhi. Kumily is a plantation town, closely associated with Thekkady, and is situated on the outskirts of the Periyar Sanctuary. It is an important shopping center and spice trade center. Murikkady is washed in fresh spice-scented air, and is a panorama of cardamom, coffee, and pepper plantations. Pandikuzhi is a picturesque place that's cradled between Chellarkovil and the Tamil Nadu State border - a popular picnic spot. Pandikuzhi offers great opportunities for trekking and is a photographer's delight. *Overnight at CGH Spice Village/Standard Villa (BLD)*

Day 12 | **Munnar**

Today you will travel to Munnar. Snuggled within the green and serene Kannan Devan Hills, the quiet and restful resort of Munnar is a nature-lover's paradise. Panoramic views of low-flying clouds and mist-filled valleys make it a pretty little heaven with a cool embracing climate. A little beyond this is Anaimudi, South India's highest peak. In the vicinity is the Eravikulam National Park, the home of the endangered Nilgiri Tahr (*Nilgiritragus hylocrius*), known locally as the Nilgiri ibex or simply ibex. They roam the grasslands or are sometimes seen climbing the pinnacles of the undulating hills. Enjoy the remainder of your day at leisure. *Overnight at Windermere Estate/Cottage (BLD)*

Day 13 | **Munnar**

This morning visit the Pothamedu, which offers an excellent view of the tea, coffee, and cardamom plantations in Munnar. The rolling hills, lush mountain forests, and breathtaking scenery here is ideal for trekking and long mountain walks. *Overnight at Windermere Estate/Cottage (BLD)*

Day 14 | **Kochi/Depart**

This morning you will travel back to Kochi. Upon arrival you will check in to your hotel to prepare for your evening departure. Transfers to the International Airport for your flight are included. *Day Room at Courtyard Marriott (BLD)*



LAND PRICING

\$6,180 per person, double occupancy, based on 18 participants (plus 1 complimentary from New York City, single occupancy). *Single supplement: \$1600.*

Cost includes: Accommodations, meals as indicated, specialist local guides, National guide, transportation, gratuities for guides & driver, activities per itinerary, carbon offset, bottled water on bus.

Cost does not include: International airfare, visa fee, items of personal nature, optional activities.

Price valid until Apr. 2018 (excluding Dec. 20, 2017 — Jan. 5, 2018)

THE FINE PRINT

A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due to secure your reservation. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure. Non-refundable final payment is due at 95 days prior to departure. Travel/trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. For more information call Travel Insured at 800-243-3174 or visit travelinsured.com. Holbrook Travel's agency number is 15849.

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