



LUXURY TAILOR MADE TRAVEL

## Tailor Made India: Mysteries of the South

14 days from \$6,995

Private Journey

*Travel with your private party on this Luxury Tailor Made Journey, departing when you choose and with expert local guides leading the way; you can even customize the itinerary to your interests.*

Journey into India's verdant southern landscapes, exploring extraordinary temple towns, spice villages and tropical coastal cities, all to discover a more languid and lush side of intoxicating India.

### A&K Advantages

Visit the coastal town of Mahabalipuram to see its extraordinary seventh-century temples and carvings

Witness the procession of the Shiva idol during an evening *pooja* ceremony at Madurai's colorful Meenakshi Temple

Embark on an idyllic cruise through the tranquil backwaters of Kerala on a traditional houseboat

Enjoy a dramatic performance by the Kathakali theater dancers with their lavish costumes and captivating gestures

Explore religiously and architecturally diverse Kochi, including stops at its synagogue, St. Francis Church and Dutch Palace

Sit down to a traditional southern Indian lunch with a local family at a Kerala spice plantation

# Itinerary

Luxury Tailor Made Journeys depart on the dates that work for you and feature expert local guides throughout your journey. The itinerary below can be customized to your interests.

## DAY 1 ARRIVE CHENNAI, INDIA

Arrive in Chennai, set on the Bay of Bengal on India's southeast coast, where you are met and privately transferred to your hotel.

The Leela Palace Chennai

## DAY 2 CHENNAI | CAPITAL OF THE SOUTH

After a relaxing morning at leisure, set out with your private guide on a city tour of Chennai, beginning at Fort St. George. Built in 1640, the fort was the first bastion of the British East India Company in southern India; today, it houses the Secretariat and the Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu. See St. Mary's Church, consecrated in 1680 and one of the oldest British buildings in India. Next, explore the National Art Gallery whose exhibits feature all major South Indian periods, including the Chola, Vijayanagar, Hoysala and Chalukya. Continue to Kapaleeswara, a Shiva temple and the biggest in Chennai, noted for its beautifully carved *gopuram* (monumental tower). Stop at the peaceful Portuguese-built Santhome Cathedral, named after St. Thomas the Apostle, whose tomb is said to be beneath the basilica. A historic pilgrimage center built in Gothic style, its cool white spire rises 155 feet above the bustling city.

The Leela Palace Chennai | Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 3 KANCHIPURAM & MAHABALIPURAM | STORIES OF SACRED CITIES

After breakfast, journey overland to visit Kanchipuram, one of Hinduism's seven most sacred cities and home to over 100 temples, most of which are dedicated to Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. Kanchipuram is also world-renowned for its handwoven silk saris, regarded for their color and sheen. Enjoy a lunch of southern Indian delicacies before proceeding to the coastal town of Mahabalipuram to see its Group of Monuments, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. See Bhagiratha's Penance, a bas-relief sculpted over enormous rocks that depicts life-size figures of animals, gods and saints, all watching the holy Ganges River flow from the Himalayas. Nearby, see its shallow *mandaps* (pillared halls), sculpted out of the rocky hillside and portraying stories of Indian mythology. Finally, stop at the Shore Temple, surrounded by gardens designed according to ancient texts. Return to Chennai.

The Leela Palace Chennai | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 4 TRICHY | HAVEN OF TEMPLES

Fly to Trichy and transfer to a local restaurant for lunch. Join your private guide for a tour of this thriving riverfront city in the heart of Tamil Nadu. Visit Srirangam, famous for its massive Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, which has 49 separate shrines dedicated to Vishnu and is so large it feels like its own city. You also view the Rock Fort Temple, a spectacular monument perched on a massive rocky outcropping that towers over the old city. Continue to Thanjavur, former capital of the Chola Dynasty

Svatma, Thanjavur | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 5 THANJAVUR | DYNASTIC CAPITAL

The Cholas were great temple builders, and Thanjavur bears witness to this with its 74 temples. Today, you visit its most famous, the Brihadeeswarar Temple, also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Afterward, stop by an art gallery to view its extraordinary collection of antique bronze statues. Enjoy your afternoon at leisure.

Svatma, Thanjavur | Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 6 CHETTINAD & MADURAI | CAPITAL OF KINGS

After breakfast, journey overland to Chettinad, ancestral homeland of the Chettiars. Home to wealthy business tycoons who made their livelihood in Burma during the last century, the area is renowned for its mansions and rich, distinctive cuisine. See these extraordinary homes with their teak pillars and marble detailing. After lunch, continue to Madurai, where you check in to your hotel. This evening, visit Meenakshi Temple to witness a *pooja* ceremony, in which an idol of Shiva is carried in a colorful procession accompanied by musicians.

The Gateway Hotel Pasumalai, Madurai | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 7 MADURAI | TAJ MAHAL OF THE SOUTH

Join your private guide for an early morning walking tour of Madurai. Discover equal parts legend and history as you wander through this ancient Tamil capital. Return to your hotel for breakfast before exploring Madurai's great 17th-century Meenakshi Amman Temple. The largest temple complex in southern India, and as significant to the region's architectural legacy as the Taj Mahal is to northern India, this 15-acre complex is a joyful homage to Shiva and the triple-breasted goddess, Meenakshi.

The Gateway Hotel Pasumalai, Madurai | Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 8 PERIYAR | THE WESTERN GHATS

After breakfast, travel overland into the state of Kerala to Periyar, checking in to your accommodation on arrival. Your journey takes you into the Western Ghats, a lush mountain range that rises parallel to India's Arabian Sea coast. Later, visit a local spice plantation, where you enjoy the sights and smells of fresh spices and learn about their cultivation process.

Spice Village | Meals: Breakfast



#### **DAY 9 KUMARAKOM | THROUGH THE DOOR OF HIGHRANGE**

After a leisurely breakfast, descend a dramatic escarpment as you journey overland to the village of Kumarakom. Stop en route for lunch at a local restaurant in Kanjirappally, a gateway to Kerala's hill country. Upon arrival, check in to your beautiful lakefront hotel.

Kumarakom Lake Resort | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

#### **DAY 10 KUMARAKOM | KERALA SPICE ADVENTURE**

This morning, travel by boat to a spice plantation. In this region known for producing Indian spices, including cardamom and pepper, a tour of a spice plantation is an incredible sensory experience. Explore the plantation's aromatic pathways before sitting down to a delicious lunch, joined by the family who owns the plantation.

Kumarakom Lake Resort | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

#### **DAY 11 KUMARAKOM & KOCHI | ELEGANT HOUSEBOAT CRUISE**

After a morning at leisure, board a traditional houseboat for a day cruise on the beautiful backwaters surrounding Kumarakom. Glide through canals and lagoons shaded by coconut palms and pass sleepy rural villages. You are treated to a lunch of local specialties as you cruise. Disembark this evening and journey overland to Kochi, where you check in to your hotel.

Taj Malabar Resort & Spa, Kochi | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

#### **DAY 12 KOCHI | HISTORIC HARBOR CITY**

Spend the day exploring the tropical coastal city of Kochi, where you discover an intriguing mix of cultural influences. Visit one of the oldest Jewish synagogues in India, decorated with blue ceramic Chinese tiles and surrounded by an aromatic spice market. See the story of Ramayana depicted in the wonderful murals at charming Mattancherry Palace (Dutch Palace) and visit St. Francis Church, both of which were erected by the Portuguese in the 16th century. At the entrance of Kochi harbor, see the cantilevered fishing nets brought from southern China by traders — a testament to the centuries-old link between these regions. Tonight, visit Greenix Theater for a performance by the extravagantly costumed Kathakali dancers.

Taj Malabar Resort & Spa, Kochi | Meals: Breakfast

#### **DAY 13 MUMBAI | A PARTING GLIMPSE**

After a morning at leisure, transfer to the airport to board your flight to Mumbai. Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel.

Taj Santacruz, Mumbai | Meals: Breakfast

#### **DAY 14 DEPART MUMBAI**

Transfer to the international airport for your flight home.

## Enhance Your Journey

Elevate your experience with a host of options available for an additional cost.

#### **A COMPREHENSIVE INDIA TOUR**

Combine this journey with Tailor Made India: The Taj Mahal & Beyond for an incredible and comprehensive adventure through both southern and northern India.

#### **VISIT A LOCAL FISHING VILLAGE (KOCHI)**

Just south of Kochi, join a local guide for a visit to the small fishing village of Kumbalangi. Gain authentic insights into daily life as you learn about the local weaving, fishing and crab farming through firsthand interactions.

#### **FLAVORS OF MADURAI**

In Madurai, a local guide reveals culinary traditions spanning two millennia on a flavorful street-food adventure.

#### **SOUTH INDIAN DANCE LESSON**

In Chennai, join a local guide for an exploration of contemporary regional dance. Learn to interpret the subtle cues that reveal the dancers' stories, and then join a local choreographer to try out the hottest routines for yourself.

## Dates & Prices

Jan–Apr, Oct–Dec; Priced from \$7,895

May–Sep; Priced from \$6,995

Internal Air from \$785

Chennai/Trichy; Kochi/Mumbai

*Prices are per person, double occupancy for the itinerary as published for 2020 travel, and subject to availability.*

*Pricing reflects A&K's recommended months of travel of this itinerary. Supplements may apply over holiday periods, festivals and special events. International air not included.*

Prices are per person based on double occupancy. Internal and international air not included. See complete terms and conditions [here](#).