

**JOURNEY ACROSS SOUTH INDIA
BERKSHIRE INTERNATIONAL CLUB
JANUARY 8 - 21, 2016**

Itinerary

January 8-9, 2016 U.S. to Chennai

We arrive in Chennai late night of the second day and are met at arrival by our representative at the Chennai Airport and transferred to our hotel, **Vivanta by Taj Connemara**

<http://www.vivantabytaj.com/connemara-chennai/overview.html>

Welcome dinner at the Raintree Restaurant in the garden of the hotel

January 10, 2016 Chennai

Chennai

The port of Chennai with a thriving global trade in silks, spices and jewels, was a capital over centuries of empires and colonies, and the region around it grew rapidly from a tiny town to the bustling metropolis it is today. Formerly known as Madras, Chennai's location along the coast offered great opportunities for industries, and like other ports in India, some of the first few industries were set up for textiles.



We begin our day with a visit to Kapaleeshwar Temple followed by St. Thomas Cathedral. We continue our drive

along Marina Beach followed by a visit of Fort Saint George. Kapaleeshwar temple is a fine example of eight century Pallavan architecture and is the oldest temple in the city. Chennai's links with Christianity date to the 1st century AD. The church was built in the 10th century on the burial site of the saint. The present Basilica of Santhome is an impressive Gothic style structure built in 1898 with an ornate interior and, magnificent stained glass windows and a towering steeple.

Lunch on our own

In the afternoon we visit Dakshinachitra, museum of art and architecture. The heritage village provides a fascinating glimpse into the homes and life styles of the people of South India.

Dinner at our hotel

January 11, 2016 Chennai to Pondicherry

After breakfast, we drive to Pondicherry and stop on the way to visit at Mahabalipuram a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Mahabalipuram was a major port town built in the 7th century. World famous for its shore temples, Mahabalipuram, was the second capital of the Pallava kings of Kanchipuram.



Lunch at The Radisson Temple Bay

We continue our drive to Pondicherry and on arrival check into Shanti Villa
<http://lavillashanti.com/index.html>

January 12, 2016 Pondicherry

Pondicherry was established in 1674. Often described as a sleepy French provincial town, it retains a distinct Gallic flavor. French is still spoken amongst the older residents and stately colonial mansions stand in tree-lined streets that are still known by their colonial names.

This morning, we will visit Auroville or the “City of Dawn” conceived as a Utopian paradise by The Mother. Designed by French architect Roger Anger in 1968, it was planned as a futuristic international city where people would live in peace.

After lunch we visit the Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry’s best known landmark and founded by Aurobindo, a former freedom fighter. Time to shop in the charming boutiques of Pondicherry.

Dinner at our hotel

January 13, 2016 Pondicherry to Tanjore to Madurai

After breakfast we will drive to Madurai with a stop at Tanjore to see the Brihadeshwara Temple. Tanjore’s culture extends beyond temples and palaces, to encompass classical music and dance and is also a flourishing centre for bronze sculpture and painting. This monumental granite temple, the finest example of Chola architecture is now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Completed in AD 1010 and dedicated to Lord Shiva.

After lunch, we drive to Madurai where we check into the **Taj Gateway Hotel**
www.thegatewayhotels.com/pasumalai-madurai/gallery.htm

January 14, 2016 Madurai

This morning we explore Madurai with a visit to the Flower Market of Madurai. Walking through a flower market anywhere in India is a fascinating experience. We visit the Meenakshi Temple. Famed for its many carved and painted halls, this magnificent temple of goddess Meenakshi and Lord Shiva has the tallest Gopuram (temple gateway) in the world. Designed in the 16th Century the Temple Complex occupies an area of 6 Hectares and has 12 towers of different sizes, maximum being 50 meters. It also has a Temple Art Museum and a 1000 Pillared Hall.

In the afternoon, we visit the Thirumalai Nayakar Palace. The power and wealth of the Nayakas is evident from the remains of this once grand palace built in 1636. The building with its interesting Islamic influence, was partially restored in the 19th century.



Dinner at our hotel

January 15, 2016 Madurai to Periyar

After breakfast, we drive to Periyar and on arrival, we check into the **Niraayama Retreat Cardamon Club** <http://www.niraamaya.in/thekkady.html>

In the afternoon, enjoy a Spice Plantation Walk followed by a visit to the bustling spice market in Thekkady. Once part of the legendary Silk Route, Kerala is famous for its exotic spices. Spices that grow well in this region are cardamom, cinnamon, clove, ginger, vanilla, nutmeg and pepper.

Dinner at the hotel

January 16, 2016 Periyar

Early morning, we will embark upon a nature walk in the Periyar National Park, Then, we will return to our hotel for a late Breakfast.

In the afternoon, optional trip to visit the Elephant camp where we can go on an elephant ride, followed by an opportunity to bathe and feed the elephant.

Dinner at the hotel



January 17, 2016 Periyar to Kumarakom

After breakfast, we will drive to Kumarakom and on arrival check into the **Kumarakom Lake Resort** <http://www.kumarakomlakeresort.in/>

Time to relax in the afternoon for a swim or enjoy a walk in the gardens.

Dinner at the hotel

January 18, 2016 Kumarakom

After breakfast we drive through nearby villages where we get an opportunity to visit women weavers spinning coconut fiber into ropes. Philipkutty's Farm is located on an island in the backwaters.

The Farm is set on a beautiful small Island practicing organic method of farming growing coconut, toddy, nutmeg, banana, cocoa, vanilla and black pepper. We walk through the farm accompanied by a member of the family who will explain the working of the farm, identify spices and vegetables and the intricate pattern of canals/waterways on the property. We get to participate in an inter-active cooking session with the lady of the house followed by a delicious traditional Syrian Christian lunch.

We return to the hotel mid afternoon.

Dinner on our own

January 19, 2016 Kumarakom to Alleppey to Cochin

This morning after breakfast we drive to Alleppey and commence your journey to explore the backwaters of Kerala on board your private houseboat. One of the most memorable experiences for any traveler is the opportunity to take a boat journey on the backwaters of Kerala. While on the cruise you will get to witness the real culture and life style of Kerala country side. The cruise will take us through the rice bowl of Kerala, where we will see her wealth of paddy crops. Relax in the comfort of our houseboat and watch the lives of people living on the bank of the lake.

Lunch on the Houseboat

Late afternoon we disembark at boat jetty and drive to Cochin. On arrival we check into the **Malabar House** <http://www.malabarhouse.com/>

Dinner on our own

January 20, 2016 Cochin

This morning we explore Fort Cochin accompanied by our guide.

We walk to the Chinese Fishing Nets, Fish Market, St Francis Church, Cochin Club, Dutch cemetery and museum. We visit the Paradesi Synagogue, the oldest in the country followed by Jew Town that is lined with stores selling spices, curios and antiques.

In the early evening we enjoy a sunset cruise on the Cochin Harbor, passing through Wellington Island, fishing boats and ending up at the Chinese Fishing Nets. These huge cantilevered fishing nets are the legacy of one of the first visitors to the Malabar Coast. The best place to watch the nets being lowered into the sea and the catch being brought in is the Vasco da Gama Square, a narrow promenade that runs along the beach.

Farewell dinner at Malabar House

January 21, 2016 India to U.S.

We will be transferred to Cochin airport to board our flight home, arriving in the early afternoon of the same day. A Travel Scope representative will provide assistance with check-in formalities at the airport.

