

South India Vacation (19 Days/ 18 Nights)

Mumbai-Mysore-Nagarhole-Coonoor-Kochi-Thekkady-Madurai-Karaikudi-Karaikudi-Thanjavur-Puducherry-Chennai

Day 1: Mumbai - Mysore

Morning flight to Bangalore. On arrival proceed to the palace city of Mysore. Overnight stay at the hotel.



Day 2: Mysore

Over the next two days explore Mysore and the surrounding area. Places of interest include the Maharaja's palace - a giant Indo-Saracenic wedding cake of a building - the colourful vegetable and flower markets, and Chamundi Hill noted for its Nandi temple. Outside Mysore visit the ruins of Tipu Sultan's capital at Srirangapatna, and Somnathpur, whose star-shaped Kesava temple is considered to be one of the finest examples of Hoysala architecture.



Day 3: Mysore

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Day 4: Mysore - Nagarhole

After breakfast visit Nagarhole National Park, 90 kms southwest of Mysore, which claims populations of tiger, leopard and elephant as well as over 250 species of birds. Visit the park by jeep, on elephant back and in a coracle. As an alternative to Nagarhole National Park, anglers may wish to consider staying at the Cauvery fishing camp on the banks of the Cauvery River at Bheemeshwari which is noted for its mahseer fishing (best season November to June). The mahseer is considered to be one of the finest game fish in the world. Overnight stay.



Day 5: Nagarhole

A day to explore Nagarhole, with plenty of opportunities for wildlife viewing.



Day 6: Nagarhole - Coonoor

Morning after breakfast drive to Ooty, a famous hill station in the Nilgiri Hills. Coonoor is just 13 kms from Ooty and offers a relaxing alternative to this bustling town. Overnight stay at the hotel.



Day 7: Coonoor

Morning after breakfast explore the blue mountains: visit the tea estate, take in the lovely views from the Dolphin's Nose, and see the botanical gardens in Ooty and Coonoor. Overnight stay at the hotel.



Day 8: Coonoor - Kochi

Drive south to the Malabar Coast and to Cochin. Over the centuries the Postuguese, Dutch and British have all influenced this fascinating city.



Day 9: Kochi

This morning visit the synagogue, dutch Palace, St Francis- Church and the spice market. In the afternoon take a harbour cruise to see some of the nearby islands and the legendary chinese fishing nets.



Day 10: Kochi - Thekkady

After breakfast drive along the coast to Alleppey and cruise by motor boat across Vembanad Lake to Changancherry. Continue on by car to lake periyar wildlife sanctuary in the cardamom hills. Overnight stay at the hotel.



Day 11: Thekkady

Early morning and afternoon wildlife viewing by boat; alternatively, take a trek through the forest with a local guide.



Day 12: Thekkady - Madurai

Leave for Madurai by air or train. Alternatively continue by car to Madurai.



Day 13: Madurai - Karaikudi

Leave this morning for the region of chettinad, just 90 kms east of Madurai, and home to the Nattukottai Chettiars, a properous banking community, who ventured overseas to Ceylon, Burma and Indo-China in the 19th and 20th centuries and amassed great fortunes.



Day 14: Karaikudi

Explore the area of Chettinad visiting some of the grand mansions that are an architectural delight. The Chettiars are renowned for their warmth and hospitality and they celebrate many local festivals throughout the year, but the days following the Pongal festival (after the 13th January) when cattle are adorned with garlands and their horns painted in bright colours is a very special time to visit Chettinad.



Day 15: Karaikudi - Thanjavur

Leave this morning for Tanjore noted for the great Brihadisvara temple, considered to be one of the most magnificent Chola temples in India.



Day 16: Thanjavur

Morning after breakfast visit Trichy which is dominated by the Rock Fort temple. The temple can be reached by steep flight of steps cut into a tunnel through the rock. Also visit Srirangam.this superb temple complex is spread over an island in the Cauvery River. Overnight stay at the hotel.



Day 17: Thanjavur - Puducherry

Drive via the temple towns of Kumbakonam and Chidambaram to Pondicherry, a former French colony: the town reveals a lingering continental influence in its architecture and layout.



Day 18: Puducherry - Chennai

This morning visit the Aurobindo Ashram, founded by a Bengal philosopher in the early 20th century, and continue to Mahabalipuram to explore the stunning temples and giant rock carvings, created by the Pallava king Narasimhavarman in the 7th century. 14 cave temples have been hewn into the cliff face, but even more remarkable are the nine monolithic -Chariot- shrines, each carved from a single boulder, which stand on the seashore. Overnight stay at the hotel.



Day 19: Chennai

Conclude your journey with a visit to Kanchipuram to see the 7th century Kailasanatha and Vaikuntaperumal temples, dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu respectively. Afternoon transfer to the airport to catch the flight for onward destination.

