

ESSENCE OF KERALA

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A two week tour covering the best known tourist destinations in Kerala. Beginning in Cochin or Kochi as its known today, visit Munnar, a hill station much loved for its cool climate and beautiful tea plantations, and then to Periyar, famous for its wildlife and thereafter to the backwaters finally ending on the beaches of Kovalam

Day 01 – Cochin

On arrival at Cochin Airport, you will be met & transferred to the *city Hotel* (30–45 minutes drive). Day free for sightseeing. Evening, enjoy a *traditional Kathakali dance show* at a Cultural Centre in the city. Overnight at *Hotel*.



Cochin Sightseeing - *St Francis Church*, built in 1510 by friars brought to India by Vasco da Gama, is the first European church built in India and is the site where *Vasco da Gama* was buried. The *Jewish Synagogue* was built in 1568, Chinese hand-painted tiles are one of the attraction. This, the only Synagogue in India has a nostalgic past of a Jewish Diaspora. The "*Dutch Palace*" was built in the 1550s; the palace contains excellent mythological murals and a rare example of traditional Keralite flooring - a subtle mix of burnt coconut shells, lime,



plant juices and egg whites - which gives the effect of polished marble. **Kathakali** explicates ideas and stories from the Indian epics and Puranas. The riches of a happy blending of colour, expressions, music, drama and dance are unparalleled in any other art form.

Day 02 – Cochin

Morning, proceed for *Kumbalangi*, a model Tourism Village near Cochin city. Experience the day to day life of a Kerala village and after lunch in the evening return to Cochin. Overnight at the Hotel.



Kumbalangi is a village in Cochin, 13 kms away and the first model fisheries and tourism village in India. Ride in a rickshaw through the narrow country roads from where you can see the village folk engaged in different activities for their livelihood, a woman in her village provision shop, a farmer in his paddy field, a fisherman spreading his net, a kid with a fishing netit goes on. Enjoy lunch at the village.

Day 03 – Cochin

Morning, after breakfast, proceed for a *village backwater Cruise* with lunch. Afternoon back to Cochin. Enjoy a *rejuvenating massage* in a renowned Ayurvedic Hospital at Cochin. Overnight at the Hotel.

Village backwater Cruise - A four hour journey in a country boat into the pristine purity of a typical backwater village of Kerala.... zigzagging through narrow canals and paddy fields fringed with coconut palms....watch rare birds....country boat making....a natural fish farm where you can go



fishing...**Ayurveda** - discover the power of Ayurveda in Kerala. Purely naturalist regimens are free from side effects and perfected over centuries of tradition. The methods of Ayurveda are unique and universal. Instead of treating the symptoms of diseases, it treats the individual. It is a total rejuvenation!!



Day 04: Cochin – Munnar

Morning, after breakfast, proceed to Munnar, known as *nature lover's paradise* (04 Hours). Enjoy the sight seeing places of Munnar. Overnight at the Hotel.



Munnar ...breathtakingly beautiful - a haven of peace and tranquility - an idyllic tourist destination in God's own country with unending expanses of tea plantations... pristine valleys and mountains...exotic species of flora and fauna in its wild sanctuaries and forests...aroma of spice scented cool air. Munnar has all these and more.... It's the place you would love to visit... It's the place you would wish never to leave.

Day 05: Munnar

Full day sight seeing of Munnar. Visit, Mattupetty, Echo Point, Kundala etc... Overnight at the Hotel.

Set at an altitude of 6000 ft in Idukki district, situated at the confluence of three mountain streams, Munnar was the favored summer resort of the erstwhile British rulers in the colonial days. Sprawling tea plantations, picturesque towns, winding lanes, trekking and holiday facilities makes Munnar a holiday resort. Among the exotic flora found in the forests and grasslands here is the Neelakurinji a flower, which bathes the hills in blue once every twelve



years. Munnar also has the highest peak in South India - Anamudi - which towers over 2695 M and is an ideal spot for campers who like trekking.

Day 06 – Munnar – Periyar

Today, you will be transferred to Periyar (4 Hrs), the famous *wildlife destination* of Kerala. Evening, enjoy *a boat cruise* through the Periyar Lake. Overnight at the Hotel.



Periyar - Conjures up images of elephants, chains of hill and spice scented plantations. Here, in the crisp, cool air of the Western Ghats you will see a lot of wildlife and observe the way of life of simple mountain people. Periyar Tiger Reserve is one of the finest wildlife reserves in India, and spread across the entire district are picturesque plantations and hill towns that hold great opportunities for treks and mountain walks.

Day 07 – Periyar

Full day explore the wildlife of Periyar. Day free for activities arranged by the resort; Trekking, Jeep ride thru estate road, fishing in pond, watching wildlife from the estate, demo on cardamom processing, cooking, etc... Overnight at the Hotel.

The Thekkady sanctuary is one of the best in the country for watching and photographing wildlife. A cruise through the waters of Periyar Lake around which the wildlife sanctuary is situated, offers lots of photo opportunities. This is the only sanctuary in India where you can have the unique experience of viewing wildlife at close quarters from the safety of a boat on the lake. The greatest attraction of Periyar remains the large herds of wild elephants that come down to the lake's edge. Tigers are sighted when the forest water holes dry up and these animals come and drink water from the river.



Day 08 – Periyar – Kumarakom

After breakfast, check out from the Hotel & proceed to Kumarakom (3-4 Hrs), which is famous for its backwater & scenic beauty, sprinkled with traditional houseboats, country crafts, rural lifestyles and Tranquility. On arrival at Kumarakom check in at the Resort.



The slender coconut palms everywhere, its never ending paddy fields, meandering lagoons and backwaters, mangroves full of nesting birds of a hundred varieties in the pristine beauty of Kumarakom.

Day 09 – Kumarakom

Full day explore the beauty of backwaters. Overnight at the hotel.



Kumarakom is a cluster of little islands on the Vembanad Lake and a picturesque, clean village like most places in Kerala. The Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary is spread across 14 acres, the bird sanctuary is a favourite haunt of migratory birds and an ornithologist's paradise. Egrets, darters, herons, teal, waterfowl, cuckoo, wild duck and migratory birds like the Siberian stork that live in flocks are a fascination for visitors. The best way to watch the birds of the Kumarakom sanctuary is a boat trip round the islands.

Day 10 – Houseboat

Enjoy your breakfast at the resort. By noon the *Houseboat* will pick you up from the resort jetty. Explore the amazing backwater life of Kerala! Overnight at the Houseboat.

What is truly magical about a houseboat ride is the breathtaking view of the untouched and otherwise inaccessible rural Kerala that it offers. The houseboats have all the creature comforts of a good hotel including furnished bedrooms, modern toilets, cozy living rooms and a kitchen. Meals are cooked on board and supplemented with fresh fish from the backwaters served by the Kuttanad locals, on board.



Day 11 – Kovalam

Morning, enjoy your breakfast on board! Later proceed to the world renowned beach destination of Kerala, *Kovalam*. On arrival, check in at the Hotel. Day free to enjoy the beach life. Overnight at the resort.



Kovalam is considered as the most trendy beach retreat in India. A combination of three small beaches, Kovalam, meaning "a groove of coconut trees," is just 16 km from the state capital of Kerala - Thiruvananthapuram. The sheltered natural bay, the azure blue waters and the sumptuous spread of green palm groves make it a tropical paradise of sorts.

Day 12 – Kovalam – Cape – Kovalam

After breakfast, proceed to *Kanyakumari* (Cape Comerin), the southern most tip of Indian peninsula (2 Hours). Enroute, visit the *Sucheendram Temple & Padmanabhapuram Palace*. Enjoy the sightseeing places of Kanyakumari. After sunset, drive back to Kovalam. Overnight at the resort.

Kanyakumari is the only place in India where one can enjoy the unique experience of watching the sunset and moonrise simultaneously on a full moon evening. Explore, Gandhi Memorial, Swami Vivekananda Rock memorial, Kumari Amman Temple & Tiruvalluvar Statue. **Sucheendram Temple**, has a beautiful gopuram, musical pillars and an excellent statue of the Hanuman, apart from a valuable collection of art from different periods. **Padmanabhapuram Palace**, a magnificent wooden palace of the 16th century, is a fine specimen of Kerala's indigenous style of architecture.



Day 13 – Kovalam

Full day explore the beauty of beaches. Overnight at the resort.



Kovalam was a small, sleepy village. It lay in humble obscurity along the picturesque coast of Kerala. Then around 1930, this little village was unexpectedly shaken out of its lethargic slumber and thrust on the international tourist map. The vendors of holiday dreams along the sea had discovered the fabulous silver sands and palm-fringed shores of Kovalam. From then onwards, there was no looking back. From sun bathing to swimming, Ayurvedic rejuvenation to yoga and meditation, herbal body toning massages to

special cultural programmes and catamaran cruising, holidays in Kovalam is a tourists delight. The Kovalam lighthouse beach is where most visitors spend their time.

Day 14 – Kovalam

Full day explore the beauty of beaches. Overnight at the resort.

This enchanting strip of golden sands is adorned by coconut palms. With high rock promontory and a calm bay of blue waters, this



beach paradise creates a unique aquarelle on moonlit nights. One can walk into the sea about 100 meters without losing ground. The underwater views, which are visible during snorkeling, are a marvel.

Day 15 – Trivandrum Departure

Like all good things, your holiday experience comes to an end but you will always carry with you memories of this unique and unforgettable experience. Today, you will be assisted and transferred to Trivandrum International airport for your flight home!!



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