



SOUTHERN INDIA: TEMPLES & TRADITIONS – A LUXURY SMALL GROUP JOURNEY (2025)

Venture into India's verdant southern landscapes to discover the history, cuisine and culture of this lush and beautiful region of the sub-continent.

Small Group Journeys, Luxury Small Group Journeys



Indian Subcontinent, India



14 days from AU\$15,300 pp



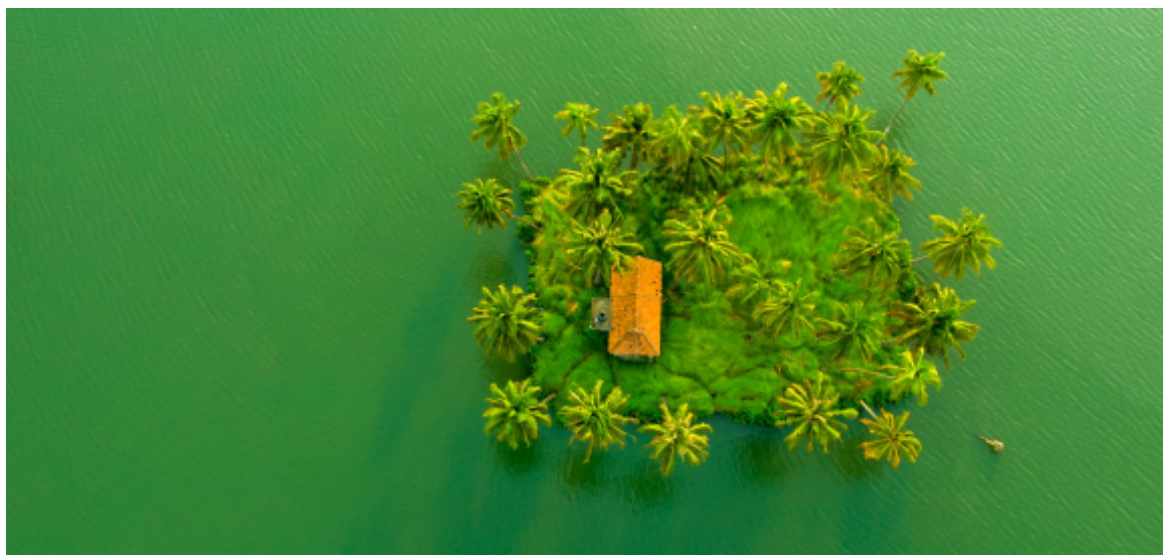
18 Guests

Journey Overview

Venture into India's verdant southern landscapes to discover the history, cuisine and culture of this lush and beautiful region of the sub-continent, exploring extraordinary spice villages and tropical coastal cities, viewing impressive rock temples and carvings, witnessing a performance of indigenous dance, and meet with locals and royals alike.

Journey Highlights

- Explore the Shore Temples of Mahabalipuram, bastions of ancient history and noted for their stunning collection of rock temples and carvings
- Visit local villages as well as an experimental community, enjoying authentic interactions with locals
- Join a naturalist guide for an exploration of a spice plantation in Periyar
- Embark on an idyllic cruise through the tranquil backwaters of Kerala on a traditional houseboat
- Meet with the Cochin Royal Family to explore their origins and learn about their role in Kerala's history
- Watch a Kathakali dance show and see how the dancers' lavish makeup, costumes and exotic masks are prepared



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Chennai, India

Arrive in Chennai, where you are met and privately transferred to your luxurious hotel.

The Leela Palace Chennai

Day 2: Chennai | City of Myths & Legends

After a morning at leisure, tour the city of Chennai, visiting the artifact-rich Government Museum; Fort St. George, first bastion of the British East India Company in southern India; and Gothic Santhome Cathedral, named after St. Thomas the Apostle, whose tomb is said to lie beneath the basilica. Later, walk through Mylapore, a bustling neighbourhood that pre-dates the city by at least 2,000 years, where residents have kept alive many of Chennai's traditions and arts. Stroll with your guide who shares stories of local life, of gods and demons, of ancient customs and symbolisms, and of Mylapore and Madras – some amusing and some baffling. This evening, gather for cocktails at the hotel followed by a welcome dinner.

The Leela Palace Chennai | Meals: BD

Day 3: Kanchipuram | Stunning Temples of Old

Rise early for a day excursion to Kanchipuram for visits to seventh-century Kailasanatha Temple as well as the 16th-century Ekambareswarar Temple. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before exploring a different side of Kanchipuram, visiting a weaver's village renowned for silk saris, delicate and delightful garments sought out by people from across the south. Later return to Chennai with the rest of the evening at leisure.

The Leela Palace Chennai | Meals: BL

Day 4: Mahabalipuram | Magnificent Architecture

Journey to Puducherry, stopping en route at the intricate Shore Temples of Mahabalipuram, a stunning collection of rock temples and carvings designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Dating from AD 630 to 668, they include such carvings as Bhagiratha's Penance, a bas-relief sculpted over enormous rocks that depicts animals, gods and saints, all watching the holy Ganges River flow from the Himalayas. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant, before proceeding to Puducherry. Upon arrival, check in at your hotel, where you also have dinner.

Palais de Mahe | Meals: BLD

Day 5: Puducherry | Cities Committed to Spiritual Insight

Drive to Auroville to visit its unique community working toward realizing the dream of human unity through diversity. Learn how this internationally endorsed, ongoing experiment in the transformation of consciousness was founded and enjoy insider access opportunities with community members who help you gain a deeper understanding of their approach to living. This afternoon, visit Sri Aurobindo Ashram, a spiritual community dwelling in Pondicherry, and stroll the city's French Quarter.

Palais de Mahe | Meals: BL

Day 6: Swamimalai/Thanjavur | Bronze Artistry

Today, set out for Thanjavur, diverting for various explorations along the way. Sit down to lunch at a local restaurant before proceeding to Swamimalai, where you witness the casting of bronze statues at a local factory. Discover this age-old art and learn about local families who have been practicing this artisan trade for centuries. Afterward, continue to Thanjavur and upon arrival check in to your hotel. This evening, gather for dinner.

Svatma, Thanjavur | Meals: BLD

Day 7: Thanjavur/Chettinad | Historic Temple & Palace

Visit the grandly carved Sri Brihadeshwara Temple, built in the 10th century by the Chola king Raja Raja Cholan, and then proceed to explore storied Thanjavur Maratha Palace. Break for lunch before driving to Chettinad. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel and later this evening enjoy a mouth-watering Chef's Table cooking demonstration on site.

Visalam | Meals: BLD

Day 8: Chettinad | Tile-Making Factory Visit

Experience the diverse highlights of Chettinad, stopping at a handmade tile-making factory, visiting local villages and markets, and being welcomed into a private home for snacks along the way.

Visalam | Meals: BLD

Day 9: Madurai | Journey to a Spice Plantation

Rise early and journey to Madurai. Upon arrival, make a brief visit to the famous Shri Meenakshi Temple. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant, and then continue to Periyar, where you check in to your cottage nestled on a spice plantation.

Spice Village | Meals: BL

Day 10: Periyar | Fragrant Scents of Favourite Spices

After breakfast, visit the plantation with a naturalist, taking in the delicious scents of the cloves, nutmeg, pepper, cinnamon, cardamom and other plants growing around you, and learning firsthand why Periyar is renowned for its spices. Return to your hotel for lunch, and then proceed to Kumarakom, where you check in to your amazing resort, and perhaps enjoy a cooling dip in your villa's private pool. Cap off the day with a thirst-quenching Scenic Sundowner.

Kumarakom Lake Resort | Meals: BLD

Day 11: Kumarakom | Rural Life in Kerala's Backwaters

Get an up-close look at daily life in Kumarakom, learning about the culture, traditions and livelihoods of the people who populate this region. Board private tuk-tuks for a fun ride to the embarkation point of a boat cruise that takes you along the gentle backwaters of a nearby river, and explore local villages. Learn about the residents' traditional crafts and agricultural practices such as toddy tapping, climbing coconut trees, weaving coconut leaves and fishing. Also discover how India's Responsible Tourism initiative seeks to minimise negative economic, environmental and social impacts of overtourism. Then, enjoy one of these **Design Your Day** activities.

- **Bike to Nearby Villages** for an up-close look at life as the locals live it.
- **Kayak the Tranquil Waters** of your resort, paddling past lush flora and keeping an eye out for wildlife as you go.
- **Relax and Rejuvenate With a Massage** at your resort's amazing Ayurveda spa.

Later, enjoy an evening at your leisure.

Kumarakom Lake Resort | Meals: BL

Day 12: Kumarakom | A Relaxing Day Cruise by Houseboat

After a morning at leisure, step aboard a houseboat for a leisurely cruise on Vembanad Lake, enjoying a traditional Kerala lunch on board, and viewing exotic birdlife along the way. This evening, disembark at Alleppey and drive to Kochi. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel. This evening, gather with fellow guests for cocktails and a farewell dinner on site.

Taj Malabar Resort & Spa, Kochi | Meals: BLD

Day 13: Kochi | Meet the Royal Family

Today, become the honoured guest of the Cochin Royal Family. One of the four major royal dynasties of Kerala, the Cochin Royal Family played a significant role in shaping Kerala's history, past and present. Begin by discovering the origins of the family, and the rise and fall in their fortunes under European rule, before their eventual union with India. Look at their role in developing Kochi and their contributions in the field of art, language, education and medicine. Then, sit down to high-tea with present-day members of the family for an incomparable moment of insider access, A&K style. After lunch, set out on a city tour of Kochi, visiting the Jewish Synagogue, Chinese Fishing Net, St. Francis Church and Mattancherry Palace, to get a feel for the diverse cultures that are part of life here. Tonight, attend a Kathakali dance show, and go behind the scenes to see how the dancers' lavish makeup, costumes and exotic masks are prepared.

Taj Malabar Resort & Spa, Kochi | Meals: BL

Day 14: Depart Kochi

Transfer to the airport for your departing flight.

Meals: B

Journey Details

Minimum age is 10 years.

This journey entails extended scenic drives on unpaved roads.

First group event: welcome briefing at 9:30 a.m. on Day 2.

Last group event: end of sightseeing at 7:00 p.m. on Day 13.

Departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 2 guests.

Included with every Luxury Small Group Journey

- English-Speaking Resident Tour Director® and Local Guides
- Hand-Selected Luxury Accommodations
- Airport Meet and Greet with Private Transfers
- Travelling Bell Boy® Luggage Handling
- Full Breakfast Daily; Select Lunches and Dinners
- Traveller’s Valet® Laundry Service
- Internet Access
- Entrance Fees, Taxes and All Gratuities Except Resident Tour Director
- 24/7 A&K On-Call Support
- Guaranteed Departures with Just Two Guests

Customise this Journey

Talk to one of our expert Journey Designers or your travel agent about booking this tour as a private journey for your own small group with family or friends. Or, if you would prefer to travel privately, find out more about creating the perfect bespoke tailor-made journey based on this itinerary.

Map



Accommodation

Palais de Mahe, Puducherry



A freshly crafted gem in the heart of Puducherry's French Quarter, Palais de Mahe combines the flavours of Southern India with French flair. Resembling a charming French mansion, the luxury hotel is a lovely edition to the CGH Earth family owned hotel group and just steps away from the seaside promenade along the Bay of Bengal and the charming colonial villas of the French Quarter.

With high ceilings, arched doorways, tiled floors and deep verandahs throughout, the hotel boasts 18 spacious rooms with modern room appointments. Large free-standing four poster beds, flat-screen TVs, air-conditioning and tea-and-coffee making facilities come as standard.

The hotel also offers an inviting swimming pool within the courtyard – the perfect place to cool off. While the hotel's Ayurveda centre is a must after a busy day of sightseeing. Only in Puducherry can you order a rich fusion of Indo-French cuisine, and there's no better place to enjoy it than in the hotel's rooftop restaurant Les Alice, complete with sea breeze and sweeping views.

Why we like it

- Perfect setting in the French Quarter, just steps from the seaside promenade
- The spa offers legendary CGH Earth Ayurveda treatments

- Enjoy the unique and enticing fusion of Indo-French cuisine in the rooftop restaurant
- Hotel bar is open all day with a large menu of cocktails and mocktails

Svatma Thanjavur



The Svatma experience is designed as a voyage to discover the mind. Experience this magical journey by indulging in the luxury of leisure while experimenting with arts in a beautiful home environment. The five star accommodation that was the former residence of a wealthy local family and has been restored by its owner, architect and designer, into a delightful boutique hotel. The hotel has the excellent location with the biggest attractions within reach.

Part of Relais & Châteaux, this unique hotel is dotted with antiques and vintage photographs, verandas and patios, and objects and artwork which reflect the rich culture of Tamil Nadu. Offering 38 heritage rooms, all equipped with a flat-screen television, private bathroom including bathrobes, slippers and complimentary toiletries.

There are verandas, hallways, lounges and spaces to congregate for the sociable and nooks, bowers and secluded corners for those wanting to retreat. Featuring a luxury spa, gym and yoga centre on site plus a choice of restaurants serving southern Indian vegetarian food prepared from organic ingredients by trained specialist chefs.

Why we like it:

- In the Svatma Thanjavur you can feel the rich fullness and comfort coupled with warm hospitality the native way
- Features a luxury spa, gym, yoga centre, outdoor pool and a choice of restaurants
- With unique spots to match your every mood, Svatma flaunts a regal personality

Spice Village, Periyar National Park



Curling around a misty ridge in the Periyar vastness, an arboretum of fruit trees, rare herbs and a profusion of flowering plants is home to the Spice Village, a truly magical destination. Recreating the architecture and atmosphere of a tribal village, it is a pure, unadulterated escape in truly astonishing landscapes.

The cottages are constructed using natural materials and local woodcraft, roofs are thatched with the same elephant grass used in tribal huts - woven using the same traditional techniques. The comforts of a modern hotel exist, but they never intrude. Modern plumbing, comfortable beds and hot showers find their place, but in a setting stripped down to its natural essence - with birdsong replacing television.

A perfect mix of the traditional and the contemporary, the property is always the perfect location from which to explore the tiger reserve and plantations - accompanied by the heady scent of spices.

Why we like it

- All the cottages have private verandas
- Highland location amidst valleys which are home to plantations of teak, cardamom, tea, rubber and coffee
- Imaginative South Indian cuisine on offer
- Ayurvedic treatments are available as well as a Yoga and meditation centre
- The resort has a swimming pool

Kumarakom Lake Resort, Kerala



With a tranquil setting amidst swaying palm groves and silvery canals beside Lake Vembanad, Kumarakom Lake Resort offers a wondrous retreat in the heart of Kerala.

Spread over 25 acres of beautiful landscaped gardens, red-tiled, wood-walled villas have been carefully reconstructed from traditional 16th century Keralan homesteads. Each villa is beautifully furnished using teak interiors and earthy tones, with open roofed bathrooms and intimate private courtyards. The Meandering Pool Villas are a highlight of the resort, offering access to the pool from a private bathing cove and peaceful lounge area. The Heritage Villas and Presidential Suites all have their own private pools, Jacuzzis and courtyards, with some offering lake views.

When it comes to relaxing, the biggest choice you need to make is between the variety of swimming pools on offer, or the extensive menu of treatments in the ayurvedic spa. There's also a fully-equipped health club and daily yoga sessions, not to mention a range of activities to choose from, such as boating, cycling and water skiing.

The resort's four restaurants, including a traditional teashop, offer a taste of true Keralan delicacies, along with north Indian, Chinese and continental flavours. Seafood lovers will find plenty to indulge their appetite at Vembanad, the seafood bar on the banks of the backwaters.

Why we like it

- Peaceful setting within extensive landscaped gardens
- Beautifully appointed villas reconstructed from traditional 16th century Keralan homesteads

- Extensive ayurvedic spa, health club and swimming pools
- Taste true Keralan delicacies in the resort restaurant

Dates & Pricing

Prices are in AUD, per person, based on double occupancy

Jan 21, 2025 - Feb 3, 2025

Price	Single Supplement	Internal Air (From)	Availability
AU\$15,300 pp	AU\$7,645	AU\$0	Call for Availability

Oct 18, 2025 - Oct 31, 2025

Price	Single Supplement	Internal Air (From)	Availability
AU\$15,300 pp	AU\$7,645	AU\$0	Call for Availability

Dec 6, 2025 - Dec 19, 2025

Price	Single Supplement	Internal Air (From)	Availability
AU\$15,300 pp	AU\$7,645	AU\$0	Call for Availability

Abercrombie & Kent

**Call Us Now on
1300 851 924
within Australia**

Melbourne Office:

T: +61 (0)3 9536 1800

F: +61 (0) 3 9536 1805

E: contact@abercrombiekent.com.au

Address

Level 26 (North Tower)

80 Collins St

Melbourne, VIC, 3000

International:

New Zealand Call: 0800 441 638

Asia Call: 800 4747 7700