

Abercrombie & Kent



INDIA: THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH – A LIMITED EDITION SMALL GROUP JOURNEY (2024)

Immerse yourself in India's more spiritual side
on this journey through the relaxed southern
states of the sub-continent.

Limited Edition Small Group Journeys, Small Group Journeys



Indian Subcontinent, India



15 days from AU\$9,125 pp



18 Guests

Journey Overview

Immerse yourself in India's more spiritual side on this journey through the relaxed southern states of the sub-continent. Prized for millennia for its aromatic spices and natural beauty, the south remains a feast for the senses, with fragrant cuisines, friendly people, and fascinating cultures. Bask in the colour and movement of bustling, sophisticated cities, sleepy fishing villages, tropical coastlines, and lush hinterlands. You'll be astonished by the Pallava sculptures and towering Chola temples of Tamil Nadu, enchanted by the colonial charms of Puducherry, and lulled by the tranquil backwaters of Kerala, in an India still largely undisturbed by tourism.

Journey Highlights

- Explore historic Chennai, the cultural, culinary and artistic hub of Southern India
- Marvel at the extensive cave temples and life-size bas-relief sculptures of Mahabalipuram
- Join a chef in Puducherry for a market visit and cooking lesson
- Visit Auroville, the New Age community founded in the 1960s that still attracts devotees the world over
- Experience an evening aarti ceremony at Meenakshi Temple
- Enter a world of tea, from plant to pour, amidst the plantations of Munnar
- Watch the colourful port city of Kochi come to life with an expert guide
- Travel during the festival of lights, Diwali (Nov 2023 departure only), or the Pongal Festival (Jan 2024 departure only), a famous thanksgiving celebration dedicated to the Hindu sun god (Mar 2024 departure only)
- Enjoy the contemporary opulence of the Colonial Rooms With Private Sit-Out at Taj Connemara in Chennai
- Typically features a small group size of 10-12 guests



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Chennai, India

Welcome to Chennai (formerly Madras) where you are met by A&K and transferred by private vehicle to your hotel. A bustling hub situated on the Bay of Bengal, Chennai showcases India's artistic, religious and culinary traditions, with many museums and temples to explore and deliciously authentic delicacies to sample. The remainder of your day is at leisure.

The Leela

Day 2: Chennai | Colonial Madras

After breakfast meet your Resident Tour Director for a briefing along with your fellow travellers. Take a walking tour and discover colonial Madras through the buildings left behind by the British. Then zigzag your way through the bustling bylanes of vibrant Georgetown with your guide pointing out the fresh produce and colourful market stalls, pausing along the way to taste handpicked street food treats. Finish the day at Marina Beach at sunset, before a wholesome welcome dinner held at award-winning restaurant, The Raintree.

The Leela | Meals: BLD

Day 3: Mahabalipuram | World Heritage Wonders

Travel south to the ancient Pallava capital of Mahabalipuram, site of the UNESCO World Heritage listed cave temples, bas-relief sculptures, pillared halls carved out of the rocky hillside and the delightful shore temple. After a lunch of southern Indian delicacies, head to Puducherry and your hotel in the French Quarter.

Palais de Mahe | Meals: BLD

Day 4: Puducherry | Local Flavours

Explore 'Pondy' on foot, starting in the French Quarter admiring the wide shady streets, colonial architecture and soft pastel-colours. Pause at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, founded by the Indian philosopher, yogi, guru, poet and nationalist Sri Aurobindo in 1926, and today a community of more than 1,200 devotees. The main building houses the mortal remains of Aurobindo and his spiritual collaborator, 'the Mother' in a marble mausoleum.

This evening, visit a local market with a chef who will provide important tips on the selection of fresh ingredients before joining kitchen staff at your hotel in preparing dinner which, as per tradition, is served in the kitchen.

Palais de Mahe | Meals: BD

Day 5: Puducherry | The Legend of Auroville

Travel to the nearby New Age community of Auroville. It was founded in 1968 and attracts devotees of Sri Aurobindo from over 45 nations. You will also have a chance to wander through the site and visit Mohanam Cultural Centre which is preserving the rich cultural heritage of South India. The rest of the day is your own to explore, or relax in your hotel.

Palais de Mahe | Meals: B

Day 6: Thanjavur | Nataraja Temple

Drive further south to Thanjavur (formerly Tanjore), the ancient Chola capital, stopping on the way in Chidambaram to visit the vibrant Nataraja Temple, famed for its bronze dancing Shiva. Observe the daily Brahmin rituals at shrines throughout the 40-acre complex. Thanjavur is home to many magnificent temples and shrines, making it one of the most important and most visited historical sites in India today.

Svatma | Meals: BLD

Day 7: Thanjavur | Dravidian Temple Architecture

Spend some time today admiring the 11th century Brihadisvara Temple, one of India's most spectacular. Seek out its elaborate stucco sculptures, shrines and statues and the exquisite Chola frescoes. Later, stroll through the 14th century Tanjore Palace built for Maratha royalty and meet artisans who craft the melodious veena, a musical instrument carved from a single piece of jackwood. Watch master painters at work perfecting the classical Thanjavur style and bronze sculptors whose techniques have changed little since the Chola period. Enjoy time at leisure where you may choose to indulge in the facilities of the hotel before dinner.

Svatma | Meals: BD

Day 8: Karaikudi | Chettinad Cuisine and Culture

Journey on to the Chettinad region, home to a prosperous banking and business community and a remarkable cuisine, one of Tamil Nadu's most famous. Take a bullock to lunch where you'll savour subtle and aromatic local flavours followed by a visit to a tile factory and a weaving centre to admire soft cotton sarees before continuing to Madurai. This evening, savour a sundowner on the magnificent Moon Deck, admiring spectacular city views.

Heritage Madurai | Meals: BLD

Day 9: Madurai | Design Your Day

Step out into vibrant Madurai, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Famous for temples built in the Dravidian style, Madurai is also home to a maze of markets and museums. This afternoon, chose from a selection of Design Your Day activities:

- **Visit a potter's village** to observe their artistic skill and discover mystifying stories from the potters who breathe life into clay models.
- **Head out on a food trail**, experiencing Madurai's lively food scene experiencing some of its recorded history that spans two millennia.
- **Join a local expert on a stroll** through this ancient city and discover stories that span the length of time - some set a millennia ago, some more recent.

This evening travel like a local by tuk tuk to witness the aarti Hindu prayer ceremony at the 12th century Meenakshi Temple, a multi-tiered, dazzling wonder, heaving with carved mythical figures and devout pilgrims.

Heritage Madurai | Meals: B

Day 10: Munnar | Western Ghats

Your journey continues into Kerala and the lush Western Ghats to Munnar, a city surrounded by rolling hills, carpeted in emerald green tea plantations. After settling into your old-world plantation retreat, stroll around the estate with an expert naturalist who will identify the local flora and fauna.

Windermere Estate* | Meals: BLD

Day 11: Munnar | Tea Immersion

Discover a world of tea today as you witness the complete process from leaf plucking and processing to packaging and pouring. Visit the tea gardens, see the plantation workers and their villages, taste the various grades and enjoy the opportunity to ‘make your own brew’. Afterwards, visit a nearby village to experience local regional life and admire houses amidst the rolling green hills.

This evening, enjoy some lively conversation with the planter’s family over high tea in the hotel.

Windermere Estate* | Meals: BLD

Day 12: Kochi | Capital of Kerala

Drive through scenic countryside where rubber trees grow and spices are cultivated to Kochi (formerly Cochin), known as the ‘Queen of the Arabian Sea’. Set on a magnificent estuary, serene Kochi has been drawing traders, explorers and travellers to its shores for over 600 years. After lunch with your group, the afternoon is yours to explore. This evening motor around the harbour and soak up the sunset.

Brunton Boatyard | Meals: BL

Day 13: Kochi | Oldest European Settlement in India

Spend the morning with a local expert as Kochi comes to life. Watch as the fishermen reveal their catch before the morning hustle at the fish market. Have tea at a local chaikadda, then pay a visit to the Soviet-era communist reading rooms. Take a ride on the local ferry to Ernakulam, where you can catch all the action of the local market and pay a visit to the city’s namesake temple.

After breakfast, visit one of the oldest Jewish synagogues in India, decorated with blue ceramic Chinese tiles and surrounded by an aromatic spice market and the boutiques of Jewtown. See the story of the 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. On the harbour shore, see the cantilevered fishing nets brought from southern China by traders — a testament to the centuries old link between these regions.

This afternoon is at leisure before absorbing Kerala’s Hindu culture at a Kathakali performance. See the elaborate make-up process before the show, an extravagant display of costumes and expressive dance.

Brunton Boatyard | Meals: B

Day 14: Kochi | Design Your Day

Today, personalise your travel experience with a selection of Design Your Day adventures.

- **Enjoy a day in the Backwaters** . Cycle to a market to taste local fruits and delicacies, cruise leisurely down palm-lined canals, lunch on typical Keralan fare with a local family and admire the impressive craftsmanship of local boat builders.
- **Meet a local cook and food consultant** , Nimmy, who shares her Syrian Christian heritage through homecooked food.
- **Tour the city with a local expert** who shares the heritage and history of the Malabar Coast through its temples, mosques, palaces and museums.

Return to your hotel in time for a farewell dinner.

Brunton Boatyard | Meals: BD

Day 15: Depart Kochi

Transfer to the airport for your departure flight.

Meals: B

Journey Details

Minimum age is 10 years.

First group event: tour briefing at 8:30 a.m. on Day 2.

Last group event: farewell dinner at 7:00 p.m. on Day 14.

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

*Please note: Accommodation in Munnar on days 10 and 11 for 16 October 2024 departure differs. Guests will overnight at Fragrant Nature for this departure.

Included with every Limited Edition Small Group Journey

- All accommodation as detailed with private facilities
- Meals as specified in itinerary, including welcome and farewell dinners
- Services of English speaking A&K Resident Tour Director
- Airport welcome
- Porterage
- Group transportation by private air-conditioned vehicle
- Bottled water during transfers and touring
- Wine & beer during lunches and dinners (selected by Resident Tour Director)
- All entrance fees
- Planning, handling, operational and communication charges
- All tipping

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

Taj Connemara, Chennai



As Chennai's only heritage hotel, Taj Connemara is an absolute standout. As the presidency of Madras became the metropolitan of Chennai, the iconic Connemara has been given a fresh new vibe by Taj, without compromising its wonderful heritage style. The grand lobby is flanked by memories of a regal past, the refurbished grand wooden staircase is embellished with South Indian stonework, and a centuries-old brass statue of Shiva & Parvati stands to attention. The result is a luxury hotel that offers all the modern-day comforts in an opulent interior filled with stories.

Guest rooms are some of the largest and most spacious in the city, each designed to relive the glorious past with the right contemporary touches, including rain showers, LCD TVs and private bars. High windows and sit-outs offer a tranquil place to welcome the day and enjoy evening sundowners in privacy. But for true relaxation, head to the Jiva Spa for an indulgent treatment or take a dip in the outdoor pool.

The hotel has two main restaurants - The Raintree, an award-winning venue that serves authentic local Chennai recipes with a contemporary twist, and The Verandah, which will surprise your palette with a fusion of Anglo Indian cuisine. There's also an elegant bar and lounge, mixing up cocktails in a traditional club atmosphere.

Why we like it

- One of the best heritage luxury hotels in Chennai
- Beautifully appointed rooms and suites
- Two restaurants offering a range of authentic local flavours and Anglo-Indian cuisine
- Signature cocktails in The Lady Connemara Bar & Lounge
- The beautiful JIVA Spa offers an extensive range of treatments
- Choose from a range of signature experiences, including a traditional afternoon tea, colonial inspired cocktails and a hotel heritage walk

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

The Windermere Estate, South India



At 1600 metres above sea level the views from The Windermere Estate are stunning, look out to endless tea plantations against the backdrop of the dramatic Western Ghats. Allow Dr Simon, his wife and their friendly team of staff to welcome you to this wonderful retreat. With a selection of 18 rooms, cottages and villas the accommodation is comfortable and traditional in style. We recommend the larger cottage rooms that have private balconies with views over the valley.

The Windmere Estate is a place to go to unwind and learn about the history of this area and how important tea has been. A great base to explore Eravikulam National park, the Tea Museum in Munnar and Thoovanam waterfall that is also close by. Enjoy your time here with the mountain fresh air before you return to the hustle and bustle of Indian city life.

Why we like it

- A small boutique hotel on a cardamom plantation
- A nature lovers paradise with a wide variety of flora, fauna and birdlife
- Activities available include a 4 hour mountain trek and a 2 hour walk round the plantation to learn about the Plantation
- Enjoy sumptuous local Keralan cuisine
- The Windermere offers the perfect home from home experience

Brunton Boatyard, Kochi



Although a new building, this hotel perfectly echoes the Dutch and Portuguese colonial architecture of old Fort Kochi. With lime-washed walls and terracotta floors, fine public areas and bedrooms featuring antique four poster beds, it is a perfect fusion of old and new.

The lobby sets the tone - a vault of sunlight and air, it is framed by arches and overhung with punkahs - enormous, old-fashioned fans of Indo-Portuguese origin. The rooms meanwhile are simple, yet comfortable spaces, with décor dominated by exposed wood, white walls and local craft pieces. All afford superb views, not least of Kochi's famed fishing nets, which date back to 1350 and whose preying-mantis shapes are one of the city's most enduring images.

Why we like it

- All rooms and suites have sea views
- The History restaurant serves a menu reflecting the cultural diversity of the region - Portuguese, Dutch, English, Arab, Syrian Christian and Jewish. The Terrace Grill specializes in fresh seafood
- An outdoor heated pool is located on the seafront
- Ayurvedic massage services are available

Dates & Pricing

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

Sep 7, 2024 - Sep 21, 2024

Price	Single Supplement	Internal Air (From)	Availability
AU\$9,125 pp	AU\$2,725	AU\$0	Available

Oct 16, 2024 - Oct 30, 2024

Price	Single Supplement	Internal Air (From)	Availability
AU\$9,795 pp	AU\$3,730	AU\$0	Available

Nov 14, 2024 - Nov 28, 2024

Price	Single Supplement	Internal Air (From)	Availability
AU\$9,795 pp	AU\$3,730	AU\$0	Available

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