Kerala and the Cardamom Hills

Trip Code: KWG

Version:

WALK & TREK	GUIDED GROUP	MODERATE
		4



HIGHLIGHTS

- Trek through tea plantations and montane grassland to the summit of Meesapulimala (2637m)
- Cruise the Kerala backwaters on a traditional houseboat
- Two guided walks amongst the incredible wildlife of the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary
- Visit the towering, technicolour Sri Meenakshi Temple in Tamil Nadu

AT A GLANCE

- 5 days trekking
- Max altitude - 2637 metres
- Join at Kochi, End in Trivandrum

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

At the southern tip of India, the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu offer a range of experiences unlike anything else on the Subcontinent. After a day's exploration in the picturesque old Portuguese port of Kochi, we drive up to former British Raj hill-station of Munnar in the Western Ghats. Here, 4 days of trekking through the Cardamom Hills takes us through rich forest and plantations of tea, coffee and spices, with a high point at the summit of Meesapulimala (2637m), Kerala's second highest peak. We then visit the unmissable Sri Meenakshi temple complex at Madurai, one of the most colourful examples of Indian religious architecture. At the Periyar Wildlife Reserve, home to wild elephant, deer, giant squirrel and the elusive tiger, we have two guided hikes (early morning and afternoon) with a forest ranger, before recrossing the Western Ghats range to Alleppey, where we meet our houseboat for an unforgettable sunset cruise and overnight stay on the Keralan backwaters. A free day at Kovalam, beside the Indian Ocean, is a relaxing way to end this memorable holiday. Combining a great travel experience and 5 days of trekking, this is a deservedly popular South Indian adventure holiday.

Is this holiday for you?

This holiday involves a mix of sightseeing and walking. The 4-day trek through the Cardamom Hills starts out on the tracks and trails of a tea estate near Munnar and then ascends through forest and across montane grassland to the summit of Meesapulimala (2637m). You can expect to be walking for up to 5 or 6 hours on the first three days and a little less than that on the fourth. The altitudes attained are never sufficiently high to cause problems with acclimatisation and the underfoot conditions are generally good, on tracks and trails through tea plantations and forest and between villages. During the trek the group will have at least one night in cabins at 'Rhodo Valley' and either camp or stay in basic lodges on the other three nights. There is one other day, at the Periyar National Park, where we will have a couple of guided walks in search of the reserve's wildlife. The trip also includes several relatively short (up to 4-hour) vehicle transfers and one longer (5 hour) journey to see the unmissable Sri Meenakshi Temple in the city of Madurai. Journey times are dependent on traffic conditions and these transfers are generally on good roads.

Itinerary

Version:

Extensions

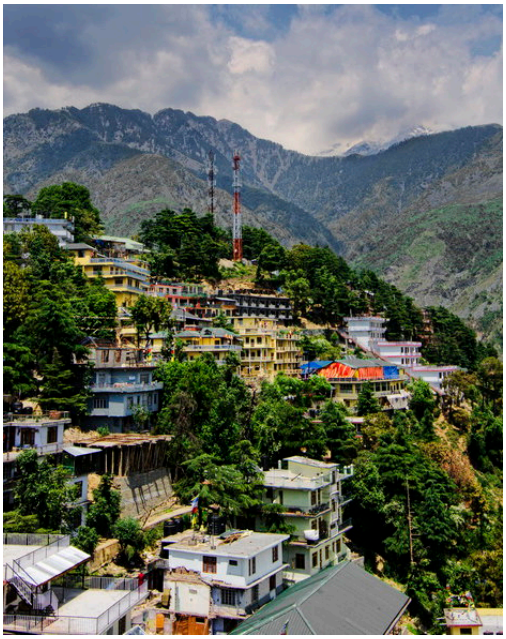
When booking your holiday, you will be able to 'add an extension option'. Once we have received your booking we will contact you to discuss additional services required for the extension and to take any additional deposit.



Delhi Sightseeing Tour - Full day

Old Delhi is centred on the Red Fort and is a labyrinth of narrow, bustling streets including Chandni Chowk bazaar. Must-sees here include the Red Fort, built by Emperor Shah Jahan; Hummayan's Tomb, constructed in similar style to the Taj Mahal and the towering Qutab Minar minaret. New Delhi was the creation of the British Raj who wanted to show their ascendency over the former Mogul rulers with many grand buildings designed by the greatest ever British architect, Sir Edwin Lutyens. Exploring this area by vehicle will give a glimpse of this interesting aspect of India.

1 day from
US$220 per person



Dharamsala and the Dalai Lama

Dharamsala is a former British Raj hill-station in the Dhaula Dhar mountain range and currently home to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in exile. On this four day extension, you will be able to sample a flavour of life in Tibet and enjoy visits to the Dalai Lama's temple complex; the Norbulingka Institute; the Tibetan children's village and visit a local Gaddi Tribal village to experience the life of the people who traditionally inhabit the lower reaches of the Dhaula Dhar.

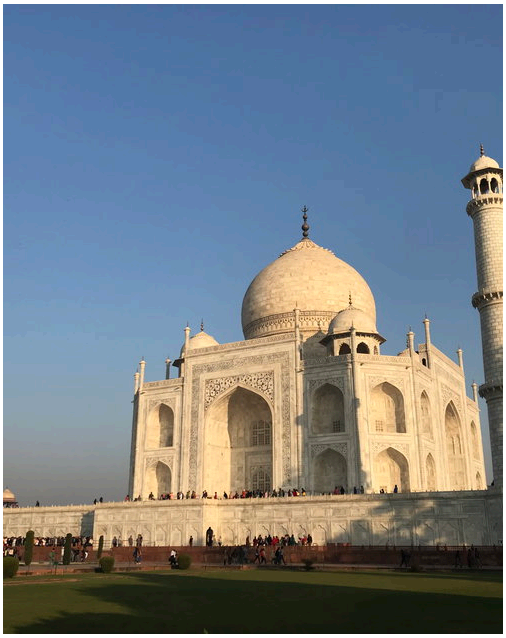
4 days from
US$1,075 per person



Agra & the Taj Mahal two day tour

Our two-day extension is for those who wish to explore Agra and the surrounding area at a relaxed pace. We start by exploring the oft overlooked Agra Fort, itself an awe-inspiring and magnificent complex of palaces and ancient forts, before waking before the next day to see the sunrise break over the Taj Mahal. Needing little introduction, the Taj Mahal was built by the Moghul emperor Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his beloved wife Mumtaz. It is widely considered to be the most beautiful building in the world. This tour also gives us an opportunity to explore the fascinating abandoned ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri.

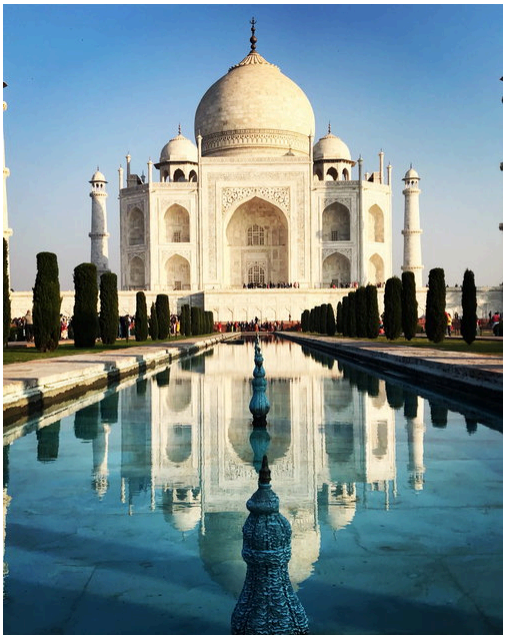
2 days from
US$605 per person



Agra and Jaipur four day extension

The Golden Triangle needs little introduction and is rightly considered a classic trip in its own right. Easily accessible from Delhi, this excursion takes in the wonders of the magestic Agra Fort, the incomparable Taj Mahal, the abandoned ghost-city of Fatehpur Sikri and the architectural jewels of Jaipur and Amber. This four day trip ensures you get the most out of these stunning attractions at a relaxed and unhurried pace.

4 days from
US$890 per person



One day tour of Agra and the Taj Mahal

The Taj Mahal needs little introduction. Built by the Moghul emperor Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his beloved wife Mumtaz, it is widely considered to be the most beautiful building in the world. Nearby is the oft overlooked Agra Fort, itself an awe-inspiring and magnificent complex of palaces and ancient forts. Traveling from Delhi on the express train and returning by private vehicle, our one-day extension to Agra is perfect for those with limited time who wish to complete their India experience with exploring one of the most admired and loved buildings on the planet.

1 day from
US$390 per person

Holiday Information

What's Included

- An experienced English-speaking Indian tour leader
- Airport transfers on group arrival and departure days
- All overland transport and guided sightseeing tours using air-conditioned vehicles
- All accommodation as detailed in the trip dossier
- All meals
- Entrance and hiking fees for the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary
- Entrance fees to monuments and other sites detailed in the dossier
- Full trekking service including and all equipment (excluding personal equipment)

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Indian Visa
- Tips for guides and trek staff
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Kochi.

A group transfer from Kochi Airport is provided on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary. On the final day of the itinerary a group transfer is provided from Kovalam to Trivandrum Airport.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

All meals are included in the trip price from breakfast on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary to dinner on Day 12.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide for special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your meals with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. You should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a Water-To-Go bottle) to treat your water. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

The food in Kerala is terrific. Rice, vegetables, fruit, seafood and a range of delicious spices are the main staples of Keralan cuisine, traditionally served on a banana leaf. Whilst at hotels, we will have the opportunity to try the local fare, although other options with a more western flavour will usually be available also. Our night on the houseboat will provide an excellent opportunity to sample Keralan food at its best. The food served during the trek is a mixture of local and western dishes, purchased locally and cooked for us by highly trained trek cooks. The emphasis is on providing a high-carbohydrate and largely vegetarian diet. All meals while on trek and also while staying in hotels are included in the trip price.

Accommodation

Throughout the trip, when staying in hotels and lodges, we will use a good standard of tourist class accommodation, with twin rooms. In addition to the 7 nights that we spend in hotels and lodges, there will be a single night in a houseboat or 'kettuvallom' on the Kerala backwaters. The boats we use have fully furnished twin-bedded rooms, as well as a balcony, sundeck and toilet and shower facilities. We spend the first night on trek at Meesapulimala Basecamp where accommodation is provided in spacious 2-person tents and where the group will also have the use of a mess tent for dining and socialising. On the following night at 'Rhodo Valley' we will stay in comfortable cabin accommodation. And for the final 2 nights on trek we will once again be using tented accommodation, although there may be the opportunity to use local cabin accommodation if this is available. All accommodation is allocated on a twin sharing basis. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired up with another single client of the same sex.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be led by an experienced English-speaking Indian tour leader. There will be a support vehicle and driver throughout the trip. There will be additional 4WD support vehicles and drivers during the 4-day trek, together with a full trek crew. Forest Service guards/guides will accompany the group at Periyar.

Altitude

This holiday involves going to moderately high altitude. During the course of your trip you will reach altitudes in excess of 2500 metres. Most people will have no difficulty with this level of altitude but before coming on the holiday, we recommend you read the advice on trekking at high altitude. You can also talk to one of our trekking experts if you have any concerns about altitude.

Spending Money

Approximately £200 (or equivalent in euros, US dollars etc.) changed into local currency (Indian rupees), should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses, including tips for your trek crew, driver and guide, beer and soft drinks, etc. If you are intending to buy expensive souvenirs, you should budget accordingly (credit cards can be useful in this respect). We recommend that you carry your travel money in the form of currency, since you will exchange the majority of this on the day of your arrival in India, either at Kochi Airport or in the city. Sterling and US dollars are equally acceptable for exchange. It is possible to withdraw cash (rupees only) from cash machines in Kochi using credit or debit cards.

Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is an accepted and expected part of Indian culture, although you should only tip for services which are well done. Your tour guide will help to coordinate these payments and he will choose an appropriate time for the group to get together to pay the trek crew including the trekking guide and the drivers. We recommend that each group member contributes around £80 (in rupees) to these tips - although the amount you give is entirely up to you. Please note that you will have the opportunity to tip your tour leader separately (and additionally) during dinner on the final evening of the holiday. Your guide might also ask you for a few rupees from time to time to pay tips to a sightseeing guide or a Forest Service employee who is with the group for just a short time. It is also a good idea if the group asks the local guide to look after the day to day tipping of hotel staff. This will do away with the need for you to be finding small numbers of rupees on a daily basis. The group will then reimburse the guide on account of these miscellaneous tips at the end of the trip.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage and a small daysack only. There is no weight limit other than that set by your international airline but we recommend that your bag should weigh no more than about 15 kgs. Your baggage will be carried by the support vehicles throughout your time in India.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the ‘Dates and Prices’ table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders.

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required**,** and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates *(see Health & Vaccinations below),* **and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check the FCDO for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

Visa India

Most nationalities, including travellers from the UK, the USA and many European countries can apply for their Indian Visa online through the **E-Visa Application** process. You must make your application at least four days prior to departure. Please download the detailed information document for details of how to apply for your visa: Visa India PDF

NB. The application process can be temperamental and we suggest you try a different browser (Firefox is known to work) if your application does not at first go through.

e-Arrival Card - Important

Separately and additionally, foreign nationals must now complete an e-arrival card to present at immigration on arrival in India along with their e-Visa. The digital e-Arrival form is found here https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/earrival/ It should be completed **within the 72 hours prior to your arrival in India.**

Ebola Self-Declaration Form (SDF) - Important

All passengers travelling to India must now also complete the Ebola Self-Declaration Form (SDF) to present at immigration on arrival in India. The form is found here https://airsuvidha.civilaviation.gov.in It should be completed **within the 72 hours prior to your arrival in India.**

Sikkim

If you are joining one of our Sikkim Beneath Kangchenjunga (SIK) groups, we will ask you to complete a Sikkim Permit form approximately 20 days before you travel. You will need your Indian Visa details for this form. A 30-day E-Tourist Visa can be applied for within 30 days of travel and will usually be processed within a couple of days. As an alternative you can apply for a 1-Year E-Tourist Visa within 180 days of travel. DO NOT MENTION SIKKIM in 'Places to be visited' when you make your application.

Nagaland

If you are joining the Kaziranga, Nagaland and the Hornbill Festival (HBF) group we need to apply for a PAP (Protected Area Permit) for Nagaland once the tour is confirmed. Approximately 20 days before you travel, we will need from you a copy of your passport and of your Indian E-Tourist Visa, along with a colour passport photo and a copy of your international flight e-tickets.

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations:

You should be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

Severe Allergies:

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips.

Currency

The currency of India is the Indian Rupee.

Preparing for your Holiday

It makes a lot of sense to spend some time before coming on a trekking trip getting some additional exercise. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. For this trip you need to be aerobically fit and also comfortable with walking up to 6 hours on some days. We would suggest that you adopt a weekly exercise regime leading up to your trip. Regular hiking in hill country is the best training but cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardio vascular fitness and stamina. Before departure, we suggest that you try to fit in a number of walks in hilly country.

Climate

The most important influence on the annual climate of the south Indian states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu is the monsoon, which brings a great deal of rain during the period from May to October. In November, the tail end of the monsoon can cause short-lived rainstorms. At the time of any of our departures, we will experience maximum daytime temperatures at sea level of between 25 and 30 degrees centigrade, falling to around 20 degrees centigrade at night. It is, of course, cooler at higher elevations, with daytime maximum temperatures of between 15 and 20 degrees centigrade in Munnar. At our highest camps, night-time temperatures can fall close to freezing, especially at the time of our January departure. From November to March, conditions in the Cardamom Hills are pleasant for hiking, fresh during the day and with cool evenings.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's **'Travel Aware'** campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. All other nationalities should check their government websites for relevant information.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- South India. Lonely Planet.
- South India. Rough Guides.
- India Guide.
- Footprint Guides.
- India. Fodor's Travel Publications.

Maps

India: TTK State Road Maps - Kerala and Tamil Nadu sheets

Fairly basic maps showing main towns, roads and railways. Relief is not shown but administrative boundaries are marked. Intermediate driving distances are marked on major roads. In the jacket of each map is a reference booklet giving background information about the state's geography, history, cultural aspects and main towns.

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our Travel Insurance page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As a general rule, you should always try to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum. The packed weight of your trek bag whilst trekking should be no more than 15 kgs.

You must bring the following items:

- Hiking boots
- Trekking trousers
- Lightweight waterproof overtrousers
- Long-sleeve trekking shirt - sun and insect protection
- Light thermal tops and/or t-shirts
- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Waterproof jacket
- Sunhat
- Warm hat
- Sunglasses

- Thermal (eg fleece) gloves
- Daypack 30 litres
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)
- Water bottles 1 litre (x2) (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Washbag and toiletries
- Small towel
- Antibacterial handwash
- Sleeping bag (comfort rating 0°C)
- Basic First Aid Kit including: antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, insect repellent, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite)

The following items are optional:

- Trekking poles
- Sleeping bag liner
- Thermarest (a foam mattress is provided)
- Travel clothes
- Pen-knife (note: always pack sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)

- Small padlock (to lock your KE trek bag)
- Camera
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

MADURAI TEMPLE:

When visiting this temple we need to wear full clothing to cover legs, shoulders and arms. No shorts, skirts, socks or jeans are allowed. Cameras, ipads and laptops are not allowed inside the temple complex. You can use a mobile phone camera inside the temple if you pay a fee of around Rs50 on arrival.

Satellite Communications:

India does not currently allow the carrying of satellite communication devices such as satellite phones and Garmin 'inReach'.

If you use such devices, please do not bring these with you to India.

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary starting at the hotel in Kochi. A group transfer from Kochi Airport is included on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary. The holiday ends in Kovalam and a group transfer to Trivandrum Airport is included on the final day of the itinerary.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Kochi (and returning from Trivandrum). Outbound flights will usually depart from the UK in the morning, arriving in the morning of the following day (Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary). Return flights will depart from Trivandrum Airport in the early morning of the final day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later the same day.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

A feast of the senses, our India walking holiday in the Western Ghats of Kerala offers an immersive insight into what the locals call ‘God’s Own Country’. Our itinerary includes fantastic trekking through the beautiful Cardamom Hills and wildlife reserves. There are fascinating walking tours of tea plantations, intoxicating spice gardens and the stunning temples of Madurai in Tamil Nadu. Explore historic forts overlooking the Arabian Sea, stay on a houseboat and enjoy the laidback lifestyle of Kerala.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 19/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change