

# Kerala and the Cardamom Hills

Trip Code: KWG

Version: KWG Kerala and the Cardamom Hills



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Trek through emerald tea plantations and fragrant spice gardens in the Cardamom Hills
- Cruise the Kerala backwaters on a traditional houseboat
- Observe incredible wildlife on the renowned Border Hike in Periyar National Park
- Experience a yoga lesson at your beach-side accommodation
- Visit the fabulous towering technicolour Sri Meenakshi Temple in Tamil Nadu

**AT A GLANCE**

- 5 days trekking
- Max altitude - 2600 metres
- Join at Kochi, End in Trivandrum

**ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS**

- All meals included
- 7 nights Hotel
- 4 nights Camping
- 1 nights Houseboat

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

## Introduction

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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 (2600m), 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 a day-hike 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 trek through the Cardamom Hills begins with a short introductory walk around the tea estates at Munnar and then involves 4 days where we will be walking for an average of 6 hours each day. 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. There are 4 nights camping during the trek. We may encounter some slippery conditions on forest trails. The trip also includes several relatively short (up to 4-hour) vehicle transfers and one longer (5 hour) journey to visit the Menakshi Temple in the city of Madurai. Journey times are dependent on traffic conditions and these transfers are generally on good roads.

# Itinerary

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## DAY 1

**Meet at the group hotel in Kochi. A single transfer from Kochi Airport is provided.**

Your holiday starts at the hotel in Kochi. A single group transfer from the airport is provided. The rest of the day is free and you can choose to take it easy after your long flight, or take part in a guided sightseeing tour which will depart from the hotel after breakfast. Kochi's winding streets are crammed with 500-year-old Portuguese houses, synagogues, palaces and forts, spread over a charming cluster of islands and narrow peninsulas. Accompanied by a knowledgeable city guide, we will visit the Mattancherry Palace built by the Portuguese for the Raja of Cochin in 1557 and watch the Chinese fishing nets in action from the waterfront Vasco da Gama Square. Made of teak and bamboo, these picturesque fishing 'engines' are believed to have been erected here as early as the 14th century. There is plenty of opportunity too for souvenir buying today. After the tour, the rest of the afternoon is free for relaxing or further independent exploration.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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## DAY 2

**Drive to the hill-station of Munnar in the Western Ghats in preparation for our short trek.**

This morning, we drive (4 hours) up into the Western Ghats, passing through lush jungle low-down and then through a dramatic forested gorge, with impressive waterfalls at Valara. After a stop for lunch at a way-side restaurant, we arrive at the former hill-station of Munnar, founded by the British during the period of colonial rule. At an elevation of 1600 metres (5250 feet), Munnar is pleasantly cool after the heat of the lowlands. Tea grows well here and the lower slopes of the hills are carpeted by orderly plantations of emerald-green bushes, tended by colourfully-attired tea-pickers. Kerala's highest peak, Anamudi (2695m), which is also the highest Indian peak south of the Himalayas, rises up above the town. After checking in to our hotel, we will go out to do some exploring around the town. There are many small shops, a covered bazaar area and a colourful Hindu temple.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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**DAY 3****Trek through the Lockhart Tea Estate (1606m). Take part in a tea-tasting and continue to camp, nestled in the plantation hills.**

It takes about 30 minutes to drive to the start of our trek, starting from a point on the Munnar-Madurai road. Setting off on-foot, we follow a tea estate track through stands of eucalyptus trees (planted to provide firewood for the tea factories). This trail winds its way through tea bushes and protective trees. We soon reach a pretty tea plantation village, quarters for the workers who ply their trade on the emerald green hillside. Here, we are likely to meet the tea workers and perhaps share a refreshing masala chai. Beyond the village, the estate roads deteriorate and we find ourselves amongst the fields of tea bushes, which present a unique and very attractive landscape. If we are lucky, we will encounter groups of colourful tea pickers as we climb gradually towards the Lockhart Tea Factory. Here, we can discover all the various processes of tea production and partake in a led tea-tasting. We will enjoy our lunch on the steps of a lovely little wooden pavilion. From the factory we pass through small forested areas before entering into the tea plantation again. A gentle climb brings us to our campsite at 1744m, set amongst the tea bushes, with splendid views across the estate and the hills of the Western Ghats. Finally, we reach a ridge at around 2200 metres where the ground falls away to the north and east between dramatic rocky peaks. After a total of 4 hours very steady walking, we reach a levelled camping place above the Kolukkumalai tea estate and factory. Our trek crew have driven to this camp by 4WD vehicle, the tents are already set up and tea and biscuits soon follow. After a chance to sort out our tents, we can hike down to the Kollukumalai factory and have a quick guided tour of the various processes which are needed to turn the fresh green leaf into the finished product. This is reputedly the highest grown tea in the world and you can buy a bag - at source. Returning to our camp, we have dinner in the mess tent and maybe enjoy a bonfire.

Meals: **B L D**





	<b>Accommodation</b> Camping		<b>Ascent</b> 400M		<b>Descent</b> 250M		<b>Time</b> 4 hrs trekking		<b>Distance</b> 11KM
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**DAY 4****Ascend Meesapulimala (2600m) on the border of Kerala and Tamil Nadu with 360 degree views of the area.**

After breakfast, we take a transfer (1hr) to the base camp of Meesapulimala to reach the open grassland that rises to Meesapulimala's upper slopes - we can just see the top of this peak from the camp. We trek for a short while through luxuriant 'shola' forest and, once again, as this is a reserve area, we have a Forest Service guide who will show us a bewildering number of weird and wonderful plant species. A short, sharp 250 metre grass slope leads to the top of Meesapulimala (2600m), which stands on the border between Kerala and Tamil Nadu and commands 360 degree views. On the ascent of this peak, we follow a trail made by elephants and we might also be lucky enough to spot the endangered Nilgiri tahr, a type of ibex. Dropping down from the peak, we find a sheltered spot to take lunch and then continue our gradual descent to Rhododendron Valley and our idyllic streamside camp at an elevation of 2400 metres.

Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Camping		<b>Ascent</b> 700M		<b>Descent</b> 400M		<b>Time</b> 6 hrs trekking
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## DAY 5

### Continue the trek to the tea plantations of Ellapatti (2100m) where we set up camp.

Our trek today starts out with a gentle ascent on an overgrown track much used by elephants (lots of elephant dung). After an hour, we reach a viewpoint and begin a winding descent towards the west, through rolling grassland, interspersed with gulleys and the narrow tracts of forest which occupy them, where we might encounter Nilgiri langurs, a large and impressive species of monkey with a jet black body and white face. The bigger stands of shola forest that we encounter are home to Indian wild bison or 'gaur'. This is great birdwatching country, with falcons and buzzards riding the thermals and a number of rare, endemic species including the Nilgiri pipit and the laughing thrush - easier to hear than it is to see. After around 4 hours (and a lunch stop) we reach the tea plantations above the village of Ellapatti and traverse around on the plantation tracks to reach our next camp. Located on a saddle between two extensive tracts of forest, this levelled site is known as Footprint Camp and, once again, it is brilliantly positioned for the sunrise.

Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Camping		<b>Ascent</b> 450M		<b>Descent</b> 800M		<b>Time</b> 6 hrs trekking
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## DAY 6

### Final day of trekking to `Top Station` (1700m), formerly the terminus of Kundala Valley Railway.

After another early start to witness the sunrise, we have breakfast, then set off uphill on a tiny game trail which follows a forested ridge for an hour, to finally reach an isolated grassy summit. From here, looking across a deep and well-forested valley, we can clearly see the start of our route of 2 days ago, including the upper slopes of Meesapulimala. Descending through forest, we continue our trek at the upper limit of the tea growing and, after a lunch stop, arrive at our camp at Top Station (1700m). Some of the station buildings are intact and used by the tea estate. This place was formerly the terminus of the Kundala Valley Railway and the station was also at the top of the ropeway which descended from here all the way to Bodinayakanur in Tamil Nadu. In the afternoon, there is plenty of opportunity for exploration, with one option being the short walk to a great viewpoint on the rocky promontory where the ropeway used to be.

Meals: **B L D**





**Accommodation**  
Camping



**Ascent**  
400M



**Descent**  
520M



**Time**  
5 hrs trekking

## DAY 7

### Drive east to Tamil Nadu to visit the temples of Madurai, including the astonishing Dravidia Sri Meenakshi Temple.

After breakfast, we board our transport for the morning's drive eastwards into the state of Tamil Nadu. This is a fascinating drive of approximately 5 hours. We quickly leave the Western Ghats behind and find ourselves on a rich agricultural plain, with orchards and extensive rice fields. Passing a number of impressive rock outcrops and through lots of small towns, our destination today, is the town of Madurai, one of southern India's great temple towns, with a history stretching back to the time of the Great Tamil Era more than 2500 years ago. Centrepiece of the town is the Sri Meenakshi Temple, built between the 16th and 18th centuries. This is a dramatic example of Dravidian Architecture, with its 'gopurams' (pyramidal towers) covered with images of gods, goddesses, animals and mythological figures. After checking in to our hotel in the city, we will have lunch, then set off on a sightseeing tour with a local guide. We will walk around the temple and surrounding bazaar area and also be invited by our guide to climb to the top of one of the 5-storey Kashmiri-run handicraft emporia which have viewing platforms on their roofs and do offer the best overview of the temple's towers. (There is no obligation to buy anything on your way down). Then, at 4pm, when it opens, we will enter the temple complex and mingle with the countless pilgrims who each day come to worship at the temple, to bathe in the Tank of the Golden Lotus and to wonder at the carvings of the Hall of a Thousand Pillars. As a taste of the Hindu religion, with all its colour and spectacle, this is hard to beat. Please note that it is compulsory to wear clothing covering legs, shoulders and arms. No shorts, skirts, socks or jeans are allowed. We recommend traditional Indian clothing for the temple visit; dhoti (tunic) and pyjama (trousers) for men and kurta (tunic) or sari plus shawls for women. These items can be purchased a very low cost in India and your guide will organise a visit to a suitable bazaar making for a fun experience and of course, leaving you with lovely outfits to wear for dinner each night. Overnight at our hotel in Madurai.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

## DAY 8

### Returning to Kerala, we drive to Thekkady, gateway to the Periyar Nature Reserve.

This morning, we drive back up into the Western Ghats and in so doing, cross back into the state of Kerala. We follow a part of the route that we drove yesterday, then continue southwards, through tea plantations and several small towns to the town of Thekkady, gateway to the Periyar Wildlife Reserve. Depending on traffic, the drive will take approximately 4 hours and we have some free time in the

afternoon.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

## DAY 9

**Take the rarely available Border Hike in the restricted reserve at Periyar where we may spot tiger, elephant, sambar deer and leopard. Visit one of the region's many spice gardens.**

At the southern end of the Western Ghats, the Periyar Nature Reserve extends over 777 square kilometres of hilly and mostly forested country. At its heart is the artificial lake formed by the construction of the Mullaperiyar Dam across the Periyar River. Declared a Tiger Reserve in 1978, some estimates suggest that there are as many as 40 tigers in the park, although that's not to say that they are easily seen. As well as tigers, the reserve is home to sambar deer, wild pig, dhole (Indian wild dog), gaur (Indian bison), leopard, several types of monkey and numerous species of birds. Undoubtedly, the greatest attraction at Periyar are the wild elephants that come down to the lake to drink and to bathe. We make the short drive to the park, where we meet the forest guards who will be our guides on the full day highly restricted Border Hike into the very heart of the reserve. We may need to split the group into 2 parties and visit separate areas of the park, as group size are strictly limited to minimise impact. The guards will set an easy pace as we head into the forest and will be keen to provide an insight into the wildlife of this important reserve area. They are quick to spot elusive deer and rare giant squirrels and will point out colourful birds and many traditional medicinal plants. We will carry a packed lunch and find a suitable place to stop to eat it. We may even get a cup of tea at one of the ranger stations in the reserve. Reunited with our transport by mid afternoon, we will drive to nearby Kumili. In the afternoon we visit a spice garden. This is a fascinating experience where we can learn how many exotic spices grow, including cardamom, cloves, nutmeg and pepper. To be able to rub the raw seeds and pods and inhale their fragrance is intoxicating. We spend a second night at our hotel in Thekkady.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel



**Time**  
8hrs



**Distance**  
15KM

## DAY 10

**Cruise the Kerala Backwaters from Alleppey, overnighting on the houseboat.**

After breakfast, we take a scenic morning's drive (3.5 hours), westwards and out of the mountains, dropping down via long switchbacks to the coastal plain and the town of Alleppey. Situated at the southern end of Vembanad Lake, Alleppey is one of the centres for exploration of the Keralan

backwaters. At the jetty in Alleppey, we will board the houseboats which will be our home for the night. Based on the large traditional cargo boats known as kettuvalloms, these houseboats provide surprisingly luxurious accommodation. There are usually either 2 or 3 twin-bedded rooms on each boat. Setting off on our cruise, we will traverse wide canals and shallow lakes, with isolated hamlets and houses on the banks. The way of life on the backwaters is based around fishing and the cultivation of rice, coconuts and cashew nuts. Birdwatchers will have a great opportunity to spot lots of exciting species, such as kingfishers, bee-eaters, bulbuls, darters, herons, cormorants and 2 types of kite. There are almost 2000 kilometres (1250 miles) of 'backwaters', interconnected lakes, lagoons and canals, which are mostly just inland of the Kerala coast. This is a unique and fascinating water world, enclosed by palm trees. We will cruise for a couple of hours and then find a quiet spot to anchor up for the night, possibly in Vembanad Lake. Each boat has its own cook. Meals are traditional Keralan fare, using fresh local produce.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Houseboat

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## DAY 11

### **Continue our Backwaters cruise then transfer to Kovalam, on the shores of the Indian Ocean.**

Awaking to the peace and tranquillity of the backwaters is a special experience. We will enjoy breakfast on the boat deep within the backwaters, a place renowned as a stopping off place for many migratory bird species. Then, after a 1-hour cruise, we disembark at Alleppey and meet up again with our transport for the drive south to Kovalam. This drive will take around 4 hours and en route, we pass through forests of palm trees, rich farmland and lots of small towns. We cross several rivers and have occasional glimpses of the beach on our right hand side. Arriving at Kovalam, known as the 'paradise of the south', we will check-in at our resort-style hotel which is right beside the beach. The rest of the day is at leisure.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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## DAY 12

### **Pre-breakfast yoga lesson at our coastal hotel in Kovalam, followed by the rest of day free to either relax or explore.**

This morning we rise and enjoy an introductory yoga lesson before breakfast. The rest of the day is free. Kovalam has a picturesque shoreline, dominated by a high rocky promontory and we can relax on the beach, lined with simple restaurants. Each evening, the local fishermen take their boats out and these are pulled up onto the beaches during the day. Perhaps you may choose to pamper yourself with an



ayurvedic treatment or massage. Meals are provided at the hotel, although you might choose to take your lunch at one of the beach cafes. We have a second night at our Kovalam hotel.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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### DAY 13

**Your holiday ends after breakfast. A single group transfer to Trivandrum Airport is provided.**

Your holiday ends after breakfast. A single group transfer to Trivandrum Airport is provided.

Meals: **B**

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# 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 ascendancy 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\$170** per person



## Dharamsala and the Dalai Lama

Dharamsala is a former British Raj hill-station in the Dhauladhar 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 Dhauladhar.

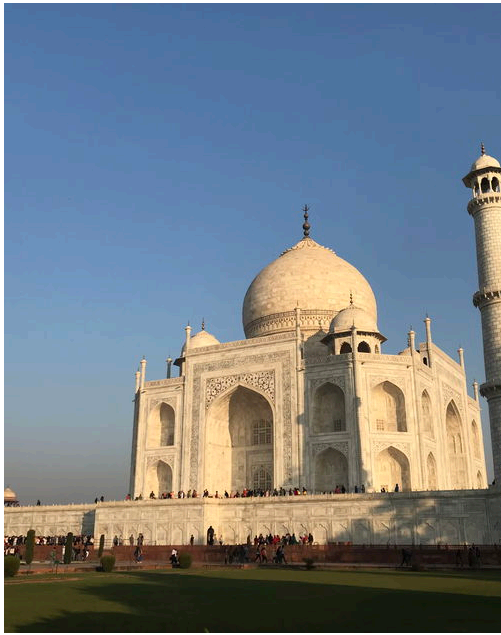
4 days from  
**US\$1,075** per person



## 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.

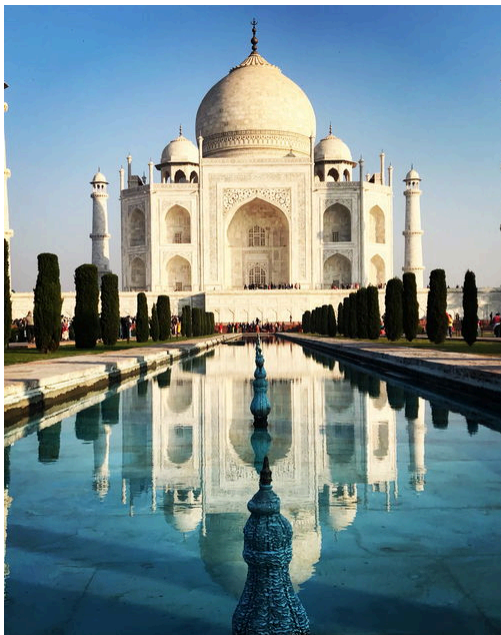
2 days from  
**US\$470** per person



### 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 majestic 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\$735 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\$290 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.

## 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.



## 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.

## 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. During our 4 nights camping, we will use spacious 2-person tents and the group will also have the use of a mess tent for dining and socialising. 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 trek, together with a full trek crew for the 4 nights when the group is camping.

## 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

We recommend that £150 - £200 (or the equivalent in US dollars or euros) should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including approximately £70 for tips for trek staff and hotel staff. This will also allow you plenty of money for soft drinks and/or beer. 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. India's unit of currency is the Rupee.

## 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 local 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 and the drivers. As a guide, and depending on group size, we recommend that each group member contributes around £70 (in rupees) to these tips. 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

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## 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](#)

### 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.

## Health & Vaccinations

### Vaccinations

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations or other preventive measures. On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dentist check up. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella, along with hepatitis A and typhoid. In addition you should check whether any specific vaccinations are needed to the regions that you are travelling to. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

### Malaria

Malarial prophylaxis is not usually required for trips in the mountains, however if you are visiting rural and remote low lying areas then they might be necessary.

### Dengue Fever

Dengue fever is a known risk in places visited. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you [take precautions to avoid mosquito bites](#).

### Zika Virus

Zika virus has been confirmed as active in this country. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites. The mosquitoes that transmit ZIKV are unlikely to be found above 2,000m altitude. For more information, visit the website of the National Travel Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) at <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk>.

### 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. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

### 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 jogging, squash 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](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

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.

## **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**

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## Why KE

A feast of the senses, our 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 an introductory yoga lesson to help you dial into the laidback lifestyle of Kerala.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 13/07/2025 and the trip is subject to change