



**SOUTH**



**INDIA**

**11 March 2012**

Sunday 11 March

Today we depart from Sydney on Singapore airlines at 12.15pm and arrive into Singapore at 5.20pm. Our connecting flight departs Singapore at 8.25pm, and arrives at Chennai at 10.00 pm.



On arrival we will be met and transferred to our hotel.



Overnight at the **Beverley Hotel, Chennai.**

Monday 12 March

This morning we undertake a tour of the city. Chennai (formerly Madras) was settled by the British in the 1600's and it still retains much of this character. At the same time the city is characteristic of all that embodies the state of Tamil Nadu.



Later in the day time will be available for individual photography.

Overnight at the **Beverley Hotel, Chennai.**



Tuesday 13 March

This morning we travel south by Road to the French city of Pondicherry.

On the way we will stop at Mahabalipuram, a 7<sup>th</sup> Century coastal port South of Madras. Mahabalipuram was declared a World Heritage Site in 1985.



Here you will see many sculptures and temples of typical South India architectural designs: the five Radhas - a group of monolithic monuments of animal figures carved out of solid rock, the "shore temple" - lashed by the waves of the sea, and the huge frescoes - the penance of Bhagirath.

Later we drive on to Pondicherry (now also known as Puducherry).



Overnight at **Anandha Inn, Pondicherry.**

Wednesday 14 March

This morning we have a half day sightseeing tour of Pondicherry. Pondicherry was a French Possession until late 1954, when it was transferred to India. It has the special status of being a "Union Territory" and not part of the state of Tamil Nadu. This unusual history weaves a period of French colonialism into the fabric of India.



The afternoon is deliberately kept free to allow us to explore the old city centre and some of the remnants of the French colonial period of Pondicherry.

Overnight at **Anandha Inn, Pondicherry.**



Thursday 15 March This morning we travel back to Chennai for our early afternoon flight to Goa .



Goa is renowned for its beaches, and we shall stay at Colva Beach in the quieter southern area - an ideal base for our exploration of Goa.



Overnight at the **Soul Vacation, Colva, South Goa.**

Friday 16 March This morning we shall tour southern Goa - famous for its beaches, temples and spice plantations.



We will take lunch at a spice plantation and then continue our tour of the south.



Overnight at the **Soul Vacation, Colva, South Goa.**



Saturday 17 March

Today we explore the northern area of Goa which will includes world famous beaches and the Aguada Fort, before we return to the main city of Panji.



The Portuguese influence, the history and the colour of Panji are a photographers delight. The nearby cathedral complex is full of amazing architectural designs.



Overnight at the **Soul Vacation, Colva, South Goa.**

Sunday 18 March

Today we fly from Goa to Bangalore. Upon arrival in Bangalore we will immediately transfer to our vehicles for the journey to Mysore. The journey will take us through the very different rural areas of the State of Karnataka - another face of India.



Overnight at **Sandesh the Prince Hotel, Mysore.**

Monday 19 March

Today we have a sightseeing tour of Mysore city, not only famous for silk, sandalwood and incense, but also a city steeped in history.





The Mysore Palace, built in Indo - Saracenic style is one of the largest and most brilliant palaces in India. It's a kaleidoscope of stained glass, mirrors, gilt and colours. There are beautiful carved wooden doors, mosaic floors, as well as exquisite paintings. We will visit the Palace by day and by night. (there is a restriction on photography inside the building, but not within the grounds)



Halfway up the Chamundi Hill is the Nandi Bull, a 4.8 m monolith. It was carved out of solid rock and is one of the largest in India. Hordes of pilgrims come here throughout the year. Right on top, is the 2000-year-old Chamundeswari Temple. The temple provides a typical festive atmosphere without overwhelming religious overtures.

Overnight at **Sandesh the Prince Hotel, Mysore.**

Tuesday, 20 March

This morning allows time for more photography at Mysore before we transfer back to Bangalore (now also known as Bengaluru).

Late this afternoon and early this evening we shall explore parts of the Bangalore city centre which "come alive" at night - a very different Indian city.



Overnight at the **Monarch Luxur Hotel, Bangalore**

Wednesday 21 March

Today we have a sightseeing tour of Bangalore and will be able to see the contrast between old and new city. Dravidian and modern styles of architecture compete with the new high-tech city that Bangalore has become famous for.





Later in the day we will transfer to the airport for our flight to Coimbatore.

Overnight at the **Hotel Heritage Inn , Coimbatore.**

Thursday 22 March

This morning we have an early start with a drive from Coimbatore to Mettupalayam to join the 7 am train to Ooty . India is famous for its many "toy trains" and the train to Ooty will provide us with wonderful images as we crawl through tea plantations and rugged hillsides on our five-hour journey to Ooty during which we climb some 6000 feet.



On arrival at Ooty we will transfer to our hotel for lunch. During the afternoon we shall explore this quaint city some 7000 feet above sea level.



Overnight at **Hotel Sullivans Court, Ooty.**

Friday, 23 March

Today is a special day, though it requires a bit of walking, as we are off to visit tribal people of the Toda community. Numbering less than a thousand people, the Toda have a different appearance, manners and customs than their neighbours. We shall stop at one of the villages to experience their lifestyle.





We shall continue on walking through this area and stop at Pashtar for lunch, before a further descent to a village called "Cocal", which is inhabited by the Kota Tribe (of which there are 1200 people in around 7 villages). Once again, this group is quite distinct from other peoples of this region.

We return by road to Ooty to undertake some local sightseeing.

Overnight at **Hotel Sullivans Court, Ooty.**

Saturday 24 March We depart Ooty and drive to Cheruthuruthy. On the way we will have numerous photographic opportunities of this spectacular highland area.

Overnight at **Hotel River Retreat, Cheruthuruthy**

Sunday 25 March This morning we have a special opportunity to visit the "master program" at the "Kerala Kalamandalam" which was established in 1930 by Maha Kavi Vallathol to impart training in traditional art forms like Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, Thullal, Koothu, Drama and folk dances.



Later in the day we will transfer by road to Kochi (Cochin).

Overnight at **Grand Hotel, Kochi.**

Monday 26 March Today we explore Kochi. With its wealth of historical associations, and its magnificent setting on a cluster of islands and narrow peninsulas, Kochi is one of the most fascinating cities of coastal South India. It is a city with indelible marks of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Jewish traditions. Of special mention is the older parts of the "Fort Cochin" area. It more or less exists as it used to be a 1000 years ago. This part of the city reflects an unusual blend of medieval Portugal, Dutch and English country life grafted on to the tropical Malabar Coast. The 16th century Mattancherry Palace, also known as the Dutch Palace is a fascinating fort with elegant buildings and interesting collections from the Royal traditions of the region. The unique feature of Kochi is the unexpected and isolated Jewish community, whose origins date back to AD 52. They are self-contained and have their own Synagogue. The area around the Synagogue, known as 'Jew Town' is one of the main centres of the spice trade. Scores of small firms huddle together in old dilapidated buildings and the air is filled with the aroma of ginger, cardamom, cumin, turmeric and cloves.



This afternoon our attention will be around the harbour and of course the famous "Chinese fishing nets" in the sunset.



This evening we will attend a Kathakali dance show.



Overnight at **Grand Hotel, Kochi.**

Tuesday 27 March

This morning we depart from Kochi quite early in order to visit the town of Kottayam, famous for its Syrian church and Bazaar.

We continue on to commence our unique experience through the narrow canals and channels of the backwaters of Kerala travelling on the traditional riceboat, now a converted "Kettuwallum".



The materials that go into the making of the houseboat are all local and Eco-friendly - bamboo poles, coconut fiber ropes, bamboo mats carpets etc. The main wood used is "Anjali ". The Houseboat provides all comforts - beds, a kitchen, western toilets and an upper deck. Traditional lanterns are used as lights. The cuisine is of traditional Kerala flavour along with the local Specialties - delicious fish and prawns.





You will spend the day cruising through remote tribal villages along the tranquil backwaters of Kerala. Sensational in its own silent way, the cruise takes you along snake boat docks, friendly cheering villagers, coir (Jute) making communities, toddy (local spirit) shops, fishing nets pitched for the day's catch, banded paddy fields and manual canoes of different sizes criss-crossing each other. The experience enables you to reach beautiful untouched areas.

Overnight on your **Kettuvallum, Kerala Backwaters.**

Wednesday 28th March      A full-day on the backwaters of Kerala



Overnight on your **Kettuvallum, Kerala Backwaters.**

Thursday 29 March      This morning your Kettuvallum docks at Thottapaly and then we drive on to Kovalam.

On the way we visit an unusual temple at Mannarassala.



Overnight at **Hotel Soma Palmshore, Kovalam.**

Friday 30 March      Today is relatively free day which will allow you to explore the photographic opportunities of the area - while Kovalam is a relaxing beach area, the local villages dotted along this area of the coast provide many opportunities to witness the life of typical Kerala fisherman and their daily activities.





If you want a relaxing or therapeutic end to your journey, then palms, beaches and ayurvedic treatments await you.



Overnight at **Hotel Soma Palmshore, Kovalam.**

Saturday 31 March This morning you have the opportunity to continue local exploration or relax.

Tonight we will transfer to Trivandrum for an evening flight to Singapore with Silk Air (part of Singapore airlines Group) departing at 10.40pm.



Sunday 1 April We arrive in Singapore at 5.35am and join our 7.10am connecting flight back to Sydney.



Arrival in Sydney is at 5.50 pm.



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**BOOKINGS OPEN ON 1 JUNE, 2011**

The cost of the tour per person has two components: US\$3,820.00 and AU\$3,855.00.  
(A Single Supplement of US\$1,410.00 may apply for sole travellers, where sharing is not available or requested. The tour will be led by Dennis Jones, who has many years experience in photographing India and leading small-groups there. A minimum of 8 persons is required to operate this tour and the tour is limited to a maximum number of 16 participants.)

The cost includes:-

The complete tour as per the itinerary  
Major road transfers are by Toyota Innova for your comfort  
International Economy Airfares from Sydney to India (flying Singapore Airlines) \*  
All Domestic Airfares within India \*  
All International and Domestic Airport and Airline taxes & charges \*

**All Meals**

**Visa fees** (for Australian Passport Holders - based on the current charge at 1/4/11)  
Reasonable amounts of bottled water  
Camera fees for still cameras only - not video camera fees (where they apply)  
Sightseeing and excursions as per the itinerary with English speaking local guides  
Entrance fees and taxes at places of visit specified in the itinerary

**The cost does not include:**

Travel Insurance (we have a special offer for Suresave Travel Insurance)  
Any expenses of a personal nature (such as laundry, phone calls, personal tipping etc.)  
Any drinks (alcoholic or non-alcoholic), except reasonable amounts of drinking water  
Tipping for any services

**\*\* Part of this tour is priced in US Dollars. We have special arrangements which will permit you to pre-pay this amount if current exchange rates are very favourable, thus avoiding future currency variations and vagaries. (Details of this facility will be sent to you when you book)**

**\* Subject to change prior to ticket issuance (due to weekly variations in Taxes and Surcharges).**