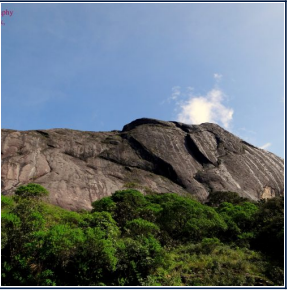




## **KERALA - TO THE MALABAR COAST - 17N / 18D**



### **ITINERARY**

South To The Malabar Coast : 17N/18D

Day 01 Chennai - Covelong

This morning, on arrival drive to the Hotel at Covelong, just 32 kms from the city. Stop en route at Dakshin Chitra cultural centre dedicated to the art, architecture and culture of the Southern Indian states. Stay for 3 nights.

Day 02 & 03 Covelong

At leisure

Day 04 Covelong - Pondicherry

Mahabalipuram is noted for the seven monolithic temples, each carved from a single granite boulder standing on the seashore. In the village you will see a huge frieze, known as Arjuna's Penance, which is cut on to a flat granite rock face. By noon drive to Pondicherry the former French colony; the centre of the town still retains a French atmosphere in its architecture and planning. Overnight stay in Pondicherry.

Day 05 Pondicherry

Today you will have the excursion to the city of Gingee to see the remarkable 15th century Vijaynagar Fort. Return to Pondicherry and in the afternoon visit the Aurobindo Ashram founded by a Bengali philosopher in the early 20th century.

Day 06 Pondicherry - Tanjore

Today drive via the temple towns of Chidambaram and Kumbakonam to Tanjore. Stay for 2 nights in Tanjore.



#### Day 07 Tanjore

This entire area is rich in South Indian temple architecture. Today visit the great Brahadeeswara temple in Tanjore, which is considered to be one of the most magnificent Chola temples in India. Drive out to Trichy which, is dominated by the rock Fort Temple. Also visit Srirangam a superb temple complex spread over an island in the Cauvery River. The Sri Ranganathaswami temple dedicated to Vishnu is one of the biggest temples in India.

#### Day 08 Tanjore - Madurai

This morning drive to Madurai, which has been a centre of learning, and pilgrimage for many centuries. Life in this bustling pilgrimage city is centred on the great Meenakshi Temple, which dominates the old city. This temple with its gopurams (pyramidal gateway towers) is covered with a profusion of multi coloured images of mystical figures, animals and gods. Stay overnight Madurai.

Alternatively, from Tanjore you could visit the region of Chettinad, just 90 kms east of Madurai, and home to the Nattukottai Chettiars, a prosperous banking community, who ventured overseas to Ceylon, Burma and Indo-China in the 19th and 20th centuries and amassed great fortunes. This area is noted for its grand mansions that are an architectural delight. We would recommended a two-night stay at The Bangala a charming 75-year-old Chettinad Bungalow belonging to the Meyyappa Chettiar family.

#### Day 09 Madurai - Kodaikanal

Today it is a scenic drive up to Kodaikanal, which is one of the most charming hill stations in South India. Kodaikanal lies on the southern crest of the Palani Hills, at an altitude of 2100 metres above sea level. Stay two nights in Kodaikanal.

#### Day 10 Kodaikanal

At leisure, Kodaikanal is noted for its scenery and landscaped lakes. Two of the most spectacular views in India can be enjoyed from Coaker's walk and pillar Rocks; however, at certain times of year the views can be restricted by the weather.

#### Day 11 Kodaikanal - Munnar

Leave today for a scenic drive through the hills to Munnar, at 1520 meters above sea level, in the high ranges of Kerala. Munnar is a genuine hill station and centre of the Kerala tea industry. It is also close to Anaimudi, at 2695 meters the highest peak in South India. In the town Christ Church with its memorial plaques to past planters is worth visiting. Overnight stay in Munnar.

Day 12 Munnar

Full day exploring Munnar and the surrounding area of Eravikulam National Park.

Day 13 Munnar - Kochi

Drive south to the Malabar Coast and to Kochi. Stay in Cochin.

Day 14 Kochi This morning visit the synagogue, Dutch Palace, St. Francis' Church and the spice market. In the afternoon take a harbour cruise to see some of the nearby islands and the legendary Chinese fishing nets.

Day 15 Kochi - Mararikulam

This morning it is a short drive south to end your journey for three nights at the Marari Beach Resort at Mararikulam. Alternatively, before relaxing at the beach, spend a couple of days cruising the backwaters on your own houseboat.

Day 16 & 17 Mararikulam

At leisure

Day 18 Mararikulam - Chennai

Transfer by car to Cochin airport for your return flight.