



The shore temples, Mahabalipuram

Medicine and Society in South India

25 January – 7 February 2026

Post Tour Extension to Kumarakom
7 – 10 February 2026



Level 3
MODERATE 



Tamil women collecting tea leaves in Southern India, Kerala

From the shore temples at Mahabalipuram to the languid backwaters of Cochin, travel through the lush southern states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. This tour will showcase some of the greatest cities and most beautiful landscapes of South India.

South India is culturally, linguistically, geographically and economically distinct from the north. From its cuisine - rich in rice, coconut and seafood from its tropical climate and sea borders - to its languages and dress, South India stands apart. It has the highest literacy rates and the best healthcare in India and is also the birthplace of Ayurvedic medicine.

Experience ancient Tamil history along the beautiful Coromandel Coast and visit the Garden City of Bangalore to learn about healing plants in an Ayurvedic garden. Visit sumptuous Mysore, famed for its silk, sandalwood, and spices, before heading up to Ooty hill station. Travel over the Cardamom Hills to finish your tour in historic Cochin,

with its Chinese fishing nets and languid backwaters, where you will cruise on a converted rice barge.

Spend time with your professional peers and meet dedicated medical practitioners in a wide variety of healthcare settings, ranging from rural primary health centres to leading medical institutions. Learn more about the traditional practice of Ayurveda and the cultivation of medicinal plants. Follow in the footsteps of royalty with a visit to SOUKYA, the world-renowned health and wellness destination.

There is an optional post-tour extension to beautiful Kumarakom in Kerala.

THIS TOUR IS CLASSED AS:

Level 3 | Moderate



Regular walking at destinations, extended standing and /or increased travel distances. Good fitness is required.

Tour leader and National Guide

The tour leader (TBC) will be accompanied by our most experienced and beloved national guide – Prince Charles. Prince Charles has decades of tour leading experience and also works alongside JBT in creating our tours as a manager within our South India ground agency. As a result, he has a deep understanding of both his home country and the skills required by an excellent tour guide. Charles is dedicated, knowledgeable and passionate about each guest having the best experience of their life. He speaks three languages fluently and is liked and respected by all his extensive network of colleagues and contacts.



‘(Prince) Charles was the best tour guide I’ve experienced. Super friendly, informative, and built a good rapport with everyone in the group. This has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience and Charles made the trip a thousand times better.’

Saraya Jade Mercer, NCP Occupational Therapy Tour in South India, September 2024



Kalaripayattu leaping

Itinerary 25 January – 7 February 2026

B = Breakfast **L** = Lunch **D** = Dinner

3 nights Mahabalipuram – 2 nights Bangalore – 3 nights Mysore – 2 nights Ooty – 3 nights Cochin



Day 1: Mahabalipuram (Sun, 25 Jan) **D**

Am: Arrive in Chennai and transfer to the lovely seaside village of Mahabalipuram on the Coromandel Coast. Check in to Grande Bay Beach Resort and enjoy an afternoon at leisure.

Eve: Welcome dinner.

Day 2: Mahabalipuram (Mon, 26 Jan) **B L D**

Am: Explore the countryside by auto rickshaws, including a visit to Kadumbadi village, village temple and a primary health centre.

Pm: Enjoy a traditional thali lunch and proceed to the UNESCO listed Shore Temple. Built in the 8th century, these majestic Dravidian edifices have retained their intricate stone carvings.

Day 3: Mahabalipuram (Tues, 27 Jan) **B D**

Am: Drive to the former French colony of Pondicherry and explore the French and Tamil quarters. This charming city is unlike anywhere else in South India, with a distinctly Gallic flavour that can be found in the architecture, police uniforms, and food. Visit the Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences, a not-for-profit hospital providing both private and public health-care.

Pm: At leisure in Pondicherry to explore and shop. Return to Mahabalipuram.

Day 4: Mahabalipuram / Bangalore **B D**

(Wed, 28 Jan)

Am: Drive to Chennai, dubbed 'the health capital of India' for its specialist hospitals. Orientation tour.

Pm: Travel by train to Bangalore.

Day 5: Bangalore (Thurs, 29 Jan) **B D**

Am: Spend a day at SOUKYA, the holistic health destination favoured by royalty. Learn about their integrative approach to healthcare and visit the organic farm and medicinal gardens, the Ayurvedic factory and pharmacy. Enjoy a delicious lunch, after which there are options for massage and treatments.

Pm: At leisure.

Day 6: Bangalore / Srirangapatna / Mysore **B D**

(Fri, 30 Jan)

Am: Visit MS Ramiah Hospital and meet with the dedicated team of doctors, nurses and allied professionals. Continue to Srirangapatna and visit the elegant summer palace of Sultan Tipu, set in lovely riverside gardens, with ornamental frescoes depicting the Sultan's struggle against the British.

Pm: Arrive in Mysore and check in to the Southern Star Hotel.

Day 7: Mysore (Sat, 31 Jan) **B High Tea**

Am: Watch the procession of the Goddess at the Temple on Chamundi Hill. Visit one of the most astonishingly ornate palaces in India, Mysore Palace.

Pm: Wander through the colourful throngs of Devaraj Market and enjoy high tea at the Heritage Hotel.

Day 8: Mysore (Sun, 1 Feb) **B D**

Am: At leisure in the city of palaces, sandalwood, and spices.

Pm: See the illuminated palace by night.

Day 9: Mysore / Ooty (Mon, 2 Feb) B D

Am: Drive into the Blue Mountains up to the hill station of Ooty. Known as the Queen of the Hill Stations, 'Snooty Ooty' is a cool, tranquil town surrounded by hills and tea slopes.

Pm: Transfer to the Accord Highland Ooty Hotel.

Eve: Dinner and gin and tonic at the hotel.

Day 10: Ooty (Tues, 3 Feb) B L

Am: Take the toy train to Coonoor on an exhilarating switchback ride through the Blue Mountains. Visit a tea plantation and factory to learn about the production of this most essential of leaves.

Pm: Lunch at the Taj Garden Retreat. Return to Ooty and visit its famous botanical gardens, which were originally laid out by gardeners from Kew.

Day 11: Ooty / Cochin (Wed 4 Feb) B D

Am: Drive to Coimbatore for brunch.

Pm: Take the train through the lush Cardamon Hills past sloping rubber, coffee and tea plantations to Cochin. Arrive and transfer to Fragrant Nature Hotel.

Day 12: Cochin (Thurs, 5 Feb) B D

Am: Visit the Nagajuna Ayurvedic Hospital and learn of traditional approaches to massage, yoga, and diet.

Pm: Take a walking tour of Fort Cochin and witness the Portuguese, Dutch and British influences. Visit the Church of St Francis, one of the oldest European churches in the country, the 500-year-old Dutch Palace, and the spice houses.

Eve: Watch a performance of the high energy, traditional Keralan martial art of Kalaripayattu.

Day 13: Cochin (Fri, 6 Feb) B L D

Am: Drive to Alleppey to board your converted rice barge for a private cruise along the tranquil Keralan backwaters.

Pm: See Keralan life unfold as you sail past families swimming, fishing and washing in the canals, past vegetable laden canoes

alongside vivid green rice paddies and coconut farms. Enjoy a Keralan lunch on board before returning to Alleppey and transferring back to Cochin.

Eve: Farewell dinner.

Day 14: Cochin (Sat, 7 Feb) B D

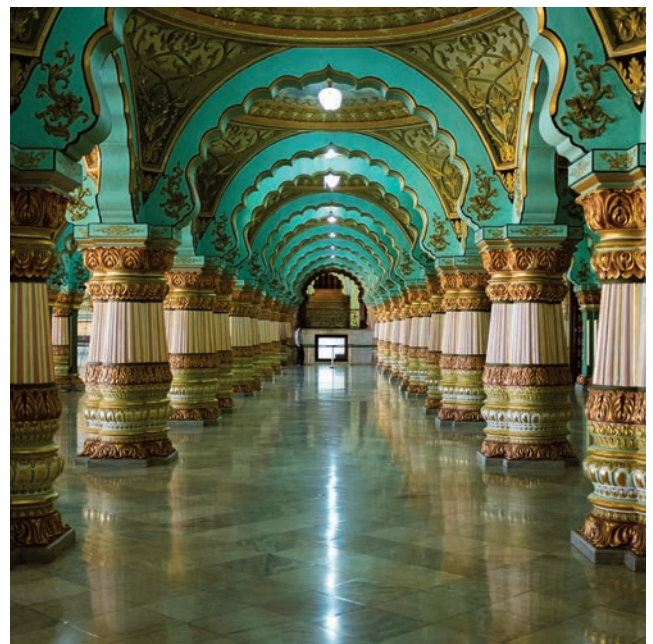
Am: Transfer to airport for flights OR take backwaters extension.

Extension to Kumarakom 7-10 February 2026

On 7 February, transfer from Cochin to Kumarakom, a village surrounded by thick mangrove forest on Vembanad Lake in the tranquil, canal-laced backwaters of Kerala. It is also a birdwatcher's paradise, with Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary being home to many species, including cuckoos and Siberian storks.

Arrive at the luxury Kumarakom Lake Resort to relax at your leisure for three nights. On the 10 February, depart Kumarakom and transfer to Cochin Airport for your return flight.

All itineraries are subject to change according to local conditions.



Inside Mysore Palace



FrAGRANT Nature Hotel

Hotels

Grande Bay Beach Resort & Spa (Mahabalipuram)

An elegant and comfortable hotel with a beautiful pool and spacious rooms, Grande Bay Beach Resort is very close to the beach with a free shuttle service. The hotel provides warm and efficient customer service and excellent restaurants.

Royal Orchid (Bangalore)

A sophisticated hotel with bright, open rooms, located in the central business district. There is a luxurious, temperature-controlled rooftop pool and lounging area with excellent views of the surrounding cityscape, a wellness centre and a good restaurant.

Southern Star (Mysore)

Centrally located and built within 4 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens with a pool, this hotel provides comfortable and spacious rooms, contemporary style, and excellent customer service.

Accord Highland (Ooty)

Overlooking the misty green hills, this hotel blends contemporary design with a homely,

traditional touch. The rooms are spacious, comfortable, and well-appointed. On the grounds, there is a tea kadai where you can enjoy a cup of chai and a butter biscuit in the peaceful surroundings.

FrAGRANT Nature (Cochin)

A boutique hotel in Fort Cochin located in a restored East India Company office. All rooms are tastefully designed with modern comforts and the suites also have a private balcony overlooking the harbour (contact us to upgrade). The hotel facilities include a gym, spa, and rooftop pool, two restaurants, a pool bar and cafe and bar.

Extension - Kumarakom Lake Resort

Set along the serene banks of Vembanad Lake, the resort spans 25 acres of luxury villas, gardens, and a large swimming pool. The complex has a multi-cuisine restaurant serving Kerala delicacies and a specialty seafood bar with sunset views. Indulge in Ayurvedic treatments at the wellness centre and unwind in a luxury pavilion room.



Bas reliefs Mahabalipuram (top); Lalitha Palace verandah;
Mysore spice seller; Mysore Palace (above)

The cost of the tour sharing a double or twin room is \$6,998

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself is \$8,358

The cost includes:

- 13 nights' hotel accommodation in standard rooms with private facilities
- The services of a tour leader,
- The services of a registered English-speaking guide
- A full programme of specially arranged cultural visits and specialist guides
- A full programme of professional visits (as per the itinerary)
- Meals (as per the itinerary)
- All admission fees, tips, and taxes
- All internal transport services

The cost excludes:

- All international flights and airport transfers
- Meals not mentioned
- Drinks with meals
- All optional excursions, tours, and visits; all personal extras such as portage, laundry, and inoculation fees; travel insurance and visas

The cost of the extension sharing a double or twin room is \$998

The cost of the extension with a room to yourself is \$1,874

The cost excludes: as per the main tour

'Lovely trip, a lasting memory for me. Many thanks.'

Dr Jaideep Israel, Integrative Medicine in South India, February 2025

'Visits to Ayurvedic centres were very good; also Mysore Palace. Loved the boat trip in Kochi.'

Dr David Wheeler, Integrative Medicine in South India, February 2025

About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.

Total payment protection policy cover (TOPP)

We have arranged a TOPP insurance policy to protect customers' prepayments in the unlikely event of our financial failure. A copy of the policy is available on request. This policy is provided by Travel & General Insurance Services Limited (t&g), registered number 02527363 and underwritten by Hiscox Insurance Company Limited (Hiscox), registered number 00070234.

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Toy train (top); Pondicherry; Backwater canals;
Chinese fishing nets (above)



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