



the  
leap

MIDLIFE PROGRAMME

# *Leap to* Southern India

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT + WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT + HISTORY

# Southern India *Immersed*

Few places burst with life quite like India. The colours, the flavours, the sounds, the sheer energy – it's everything you imagine and more. But this Leap takes you beyond the usual golden triangle, deep into the lesser-known South where history, community, and purpose collide.

**LOCATIONS:**

KOCHI + MUNNAR + BACKWATERS + MARARI BEACH

**ACCOMMODATION:**

MIX OF HOTELS + CAMPING + HOUSE BOAT

**TEAM SIZE:**

MAX 12 PER DEPARTURE

**FITNESS:**

MEDIUM FITNESS REQUIRED





# India *Itinerary*

## *Day 1 – 5 Kochi*

### *Settle in & contribution & explore*

Your journey begins in Fort Kochi, a coastal gem where old-world charm meets India's famously generous warmth. These first five days are all about easing in, soaking up the atmosphere, and connecting with the people who make this place so special – introduced to us by our wonderful partner, Ridhi.

#### Day 1 – Arrival & Settle

You'll check into your lovely hotel in the centre of town, and ease into Kochi life with a gentle post-flight yoga session (time permitting). That evening, you'll gather for a welcome dinner at the Old Harbour, the perfect way to unwind and toast the adventure ahead.

#### Day 2 – Explore & Feast

Today you'll step into the city's rhythm with a heritage walking tour to get our bearings, followed by a fabulous Kerala cooking class with the wonderful Nimmy's house: <https://nimmypaul.com/>

#### Day 3 – 5 Purpose & Connection

Over the next few days, you'll split your time between a women's empowerment centre and a local school. Expect confidence-building English sessions and workshops – very "Marigold Hotel".

#### Daily Life in Kochi – The Leap Blend

Because this is a Leap adventure, your days will be beautifully balanced with soul-nourishing downtime: sunrise yoga before breakfast, restorative Ayurvedic massages, café hopping and boutique browsing in Jew Town, lots of shopping (of course), and leisurely swims at the iconic Cochin Club.

#### Evenings – Kochi on a Plate

As the sun sets, you'll eat your way around Kochi's best spots – Paragon, Mai House, Brunton Boatyard – each one adding its own flavour to the week.



# India *Itinerary*

## *Days 6 – 8* Western Ghats

### *Tribal Life, Hillside Calm and Two Gorgeous Days of Walking*

After Kochi, you'll journey inland to the Western Ghats (in the Munnar region) for cooler air, rolling green hills, and tea-covered slopes. This stunning landscape will be your home for two nights, based at a wonderful tented camp tucked into the hills with big views and home-cooked food. Peaceful, and a perfect contrast to coastal Kochi. *FYI - 4- 5 hour drive.*

#### Day 1 – Arrival & Gentle Hike to the Tribal Village

Once you've settled into camp, you'll stretch your legs with a gentle afternoon hike to a nearby tribal village. It's an easy, scenic walk through spice gardens and forest paths, leading us into a community that has lived in harmony with these mountains for generations.

#### Day 2 – Papathyshola Hike

The next morning you'll set off for your main Papathyshola hike – around 4–5 hours, roughly 8km, on easy-to-moderate trails at 1,600–1,800m. You'll wander through cardamom and pepper plantations, tea-lined ridges, forest pockets and misty viewpoints, returning to camp, where hot showers, home-cooked curries and hilltop sunsets await.

#### Day 3 – Short Morning Hike & Tea Factory Visit

On your final morning, you'll take a shorter tea-scented walk along the slopes before heading to the historic Harrison Malayalam Tea Factory, to learn about the leaf-to-cup journey - withering to rolling to drying - and finish with a tasting of their finest brews. Then it's time to meander back toward Kochi for the night before the backwaters.







# India *Itinerary*

## Day 9 Kerala Backwaters

### *A Night Afloat in Complete Peace*

After your time in the hills, it's time to drift along the Kerala backwaters for one of the loveliest moments of the whole journey, a night aboard a traditional Kettuvallam houseboat. Think wide, palm-fringed canals, mirror-still water and that gentle putter of the engine. Heaven.

You'll board in the afternoon and settle into your wooden, thatched boat – comfy cabins, an open deck for lounging, and a small crew who somehow conjure up the most delicious home-cooked curries from a tiny kitchen. As you glide past village life, children waving from the banks, fishermen paddling by, women washing clothes in jewel-green water, you really feel the rhythm of this part of India.

Sunset on the backwaters is pure magic: the sky turning apricot, palms silhouetted against the mirror-like lagoons – cold drink in hand, chatting, reading, dozing – whatever the mood calls for.

Dinner is served under the stars. Utterly peaceful.

By morning, you'll cruise a little further, enjoy breakfast on deck, and then step ashore feeling like we've slipped into another world, rested, restored and ready for the beach.





# India *Itinerary*

## *Days 10 & 11 Marari Beach*

### *Two Blissful Nights to Unwind and Exhale*

You'll end your adventure with two dreamy nights at Marari Beach, one of Kerala's most peaceful stretches of sand. This is time to slow right down, books by the pool, long swims, Ayurvedic treatments and yoga session to return home glowing.

Marari is all about simple, barefoot luxury: palm trees swaying overhead, fishing boats pulling in at sunrise, and wide golden beaches.

It's the perfect, gentle finale, a chance to rest, reflect and soak up the warmth of South India before you make your way home.



# India *Itinerary*

## *Day 12 Airport/Departure*

*Transfer back to Kochi Airport*



# India *Staying & Food*

*Your accommodation will be stylish yet simple, eco-conscious.*

## KOCHI

<https://tissasinn.in/> (or similar)

Welcome dinner on the first night included, thereafter **breakfast, lunch only in Kochi.**

## MUNNAR TREK

This multiday trek will take you along mountainous trails, lakes and even through dense cloud forest. You'll spend your evenings camping in Indian style tents. All the camping gear you need will be provided for you on site, all you need is a day bag with your essentials.

**All meals included at the camp - drinks are not.**

## KERALA BACKWATERS

Spend your night cruising down the breathtaking backwaters, sleeping on a traditional Houseboat.

**Breakfast, lunch and dinner included - drinks are not.**

## MARARI BEACH:

<https://www.cghearth.com/marari-beach>

**Breakfast, dinner included - lunch drinks are not.**

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

*Twin accommodation throughout - single supplement available on request.*

*Drinks are not included.*

*Lunch on the way back from the trek is also not included as we will stop off in one of the little cafes in Munnar.*



# Project *Background*

Our India adventure comes to life through our inspiring local partner, Ridhi Patel, founder of Volunteering Journeys.

Ridhi has spent years building deep, meaningful connections across Kochi – from artists and educators to grassroots changemakers, chefs, yoga teachers, and half the Cochin Club. Through her little black book, you're not just visiting Fort Kochi...you're stepping straight into her world.

She's opening doors that ordinary travellers never find: private studio visits with local artists, dinners in tucked-away restaurants only the locals know, a warm welcome into the Cochin Club, and introductions to her family and friends who will host, feed, teach and look after you like their own.

Together, we've shaped an itinerary that speaks directly to the midlife spirit – purposeful, sociable, curious, and full of those “I would never have done this on my own” moments. You'll be part of two uplifting community projects, supporting English and confidence-building in both a women's empowerment centre and a local school. The work is gentle but meaningful – more conversation than curriculum – and the connections you make will stay with you long after you leave.

This isn't sightseeing. It's proper cultural immersion, the kind that only happens when someone like Ridhi opens her address book, and her heart, and invites us in.

# India *Dates & Costs* 2026

2026 - £3500

2027 - £3550

## INCLUDED:

- Pre-departure briefing
- Airport pick-up and return transfers for team flight
- Safety and induction briefing on arrival
- All activities as described
- Project-to-project transport
- Accommodation as described
- Meals as described
- 2-night adventure in the Western Ghats
- 3 yoga classes in Kochi

## NOT INCLUDED:

- International flights and visa
- Private transfers to and from the airport if you do not arrive on the main team flight
- Travel insurance
- Medical expenses
- Food as described and Alcoholic drinks
- Laundry fees
- Tour tips

## Good to Know

**Indian Visa** required - <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>

**Passport:** Your passport must be valid for at least six months from your date of entry and have at least two blank pages for visa stamps and immigration stamps.

**Phones & WIFI:** Wifi is available apart from the Houseboat and the Trek.

**Money:** We recommend bringing a combination of a debit card and a Revolut (or similar) card for convenience and security. ATMs are widely available, making it easy to withdraw money as needed.

**Flights:** You'll fly into and out of Cochin Airport (COK).

# India *What to Pack?*

## Clothes

- Less is more and a laundry service is available
- A selection of light weight trousers, shorts, t-shirts to wear during the day for project work
- A selection of nice clothes for the evenings
- A long sleeved t-shirt for working within schools.
- A hoodie/fleece for the trek
- A lightweight waterproof jacket
- 1 pair of sturdy trainers/walking shoes
- 1 pair casual shoes & flip-flops
- Beach wear: sun hat, swimmers etc.

## Toiletries & Medical

- Basic everyday toiletries
- Sun cream/after sun
- Travel wash
- Hand sanitiser
- Insect repellent
- Antibacterial spray/cream for open wounds.
- Rehydration powders/tablets
- Antihistamines
- Immodium
- Personal Medication: Bring extra supplies, know the generic names of your medication, and ensure you can manage allergies (e.g. carry an epipen if necessary)

## Equipment

- Towel/sarong for beach and swimming pool.
- Plug adapter- 2 round pin type required
- Sunglasses
- Water bottle
- Sun hat

## Good to Know

- No hard suitcases allowed.
- Limit your packing.
- Plenty of cheap bags to buy there to bring the shopping home.





Reserve your place

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