Flavors of South India

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Day 1

DAY 01 || ARRIVE COCHIN || INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT

Welcome to God’s own country Kerala! Upon arrival you will be met and assisted by our company representative and after traditional Indian greeting you will be transferred to your hotel. Cochin, is a coastal city located on a set of islands and narrow peninsulas, which treasures many and varied attractions to visit, such as the oldest Catholic Church in India, gloomy and lethargic streets flanked by huge centenary trees, Portuguese colonial houses with more 500 years of history, Chinese fishing networks and a Jewish synagogue of the 16th century. Afternoon proceed for a half day exploring Cochin city visiting Dutch Palace, Jew town’ and Synagogue (Closed on Saturdays & Jewish Holidays), Chinese Fishing nets. Dutch Palace (Closed on Fridays & National Holidays) - also known as the Mattancherry Palace and was built by the Portuguese. It was constructed and gifted to the Raja of Cochin in 1555 by them. It is believed that the Portuguese built the place to appease the king after they looted a nearby temple. Synagogue situated in a quarter of the Old Cochin and is also known as the Pradesi Synagogue. This revered structure is the only one of the seven synagogues in the area that is still in use. Later visit the St Francis Church, reputed as the first in India, built in 1503 by the Franciscan monks who accompanied the expedition of Pedro Álvarez Cabral. Here he was provisionally Basque Range in 1524 until his body was repatriated to Portugal. Overnight at hotel.

Day 2

DAY 02 || COCHIN

After breakfast proceed to Indian Spices Board, who supports farmers, ensures quality control, conducts research, and promotes India’s 52 varieties of spices globally. It plays a vital role in maintaining India’s position as the world’s largest producer and exporter of spices. Post visit enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. Afternoon visit Jayalakshmi Silk Emporium & Ernakulam Market area to see the vegetables, spice shops etc. Evening enjoy Kathakali dance performance, one of the main forms of classical dance-drama of India. It is indigenous to southwestern India, particularly the state of Kerala, and is based on subject matter from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and stories from Shiva literature. During the action, voices chant the story as mimed by dancers; incidental dances, accompanied by ear-splitting drumbeats, enrich the performance. Traditionally, Kathakali is performed exclusively by men and young boys who play the parts of both males and females. The dancers are dedicated to its practice throughout their lives. Overnight at hotel.

Day 3

DAY 03 || COCHIN - MUNNAR || 135 KMS / 4 HRS

After breakfast check out from hotel and drive to Munnar, is known for its rolling hills, misty valleys, tea plantations and scenic streams. It's also home to a variety of rare flora and fauna, including the Neelakurinji flower, which blooms once every 12 years. Upon arrival, check-in at the hotel. Later time free to enjoy the natural beauty of Munnar. Afternoon proceed with guided tea plantation walk, visit the Tea Museum and learn about the tea-making process including a visit to Tea factory. A tea plantation walk offers a serene

experience through lush, green tea estates, where you can enjoy scenic views, learn about tea cultivation, and witness the tea-picking process up close. It's a peaceful way to connect with nature and explore Munnar’s rich tea heritage. Overnight at hotel.

Day 4

DAY 04 || MUNNAR - ALLEPPEY || 165 KMS / 4 HRS 42 MINS

After breakfast check out and drive to Alleppey and board on a traditional houseboat in the backwaters, the Backwaters are a network of canals, lakes, lagoons and rivers that flood a strip of land that runs parallel to the coast of Kerala. Inside, there are patches of land used for the cultivation of rice, and the production of coconuts, copra and cashew nuts, and in them you can observe the daily activity of its inhabitants. Overnight on houseboat.

Day 5

DAY 05 || ALLEPPEY - THEKKADY || 130 KMS / 3 HRS 45 MINS

After breakfast check out houseboat and drive to Thekkady through the delightful Cardamom Hills also known for its wildlife, rainforests, and spice plantations. It's also home to the Periyar Tiger Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Upon arrival, check-in at the hotel. Afternoon take a walk through the Spice plantations to see cardamom, nutmeg, pepper, cloves, vanilla and all spice growing. etc., where you can see how the spices are grown and harvested. You can also learn about the various traditional and modern techniques used in cultivation and processing of spices, including organic farming methods. Spice plantation tour help to know how the spices are sorted, graded, and packaged for sale and you can buy fresh spices from farm at lowest price. A walk through the plantation, they are welcomed with the aroma of different spices. The air is filled with the fragrance of cinnamon, cardamom, and pepper. You guide will explain the various uses of each spice, and you can even taste before processing them. Overnight at hotel.

Day 6

DAY 06 || THEKKADY - MADURAI || 135 KMS / 3 HRS

A relaxing morning after an early boat excursion (2 hours) on the lake of the Periyar Reserve. Periyar National Park, located in the Western Ghats of Kerala, is a renowned wildlife sanctuary. Covering an area of around 925 square kilometers, it is famous for its picturesque lake, diverse flora and fauna, and as a sanctuary for the endangered Indian tiger and the Asian elephant. Established in 1950 and later declared a sanctuary in 1978, Periyar offers activities like boat safaris on Periyar Lake, trekking, and wildlife viewing. The park is part of the Periyar Tiger Reserve, with rich biodiversity including rare species of birds, reptiles, and plants. It’s also known for its efforts in wildlife conservation and eco-tourism. After breakfast, you will drive to Madurai, known for its rich history, vibrant culture, and ancient temples, Madurai is often referred to as the "Athens of the East." The city's centerpiece is the Meenakshi Amman Temple, a stunning example of Dravidian architecture, dedicated to Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar. Madurai has long been a center of Tamil culture, literature, and art, with a history dating back over 2,500 years. The city is also famous for its bustling markets, traditional festivals, and the famous Madurai jasmine flowers. It serves as an important hub for both religious pilgrims and cultural tourism. Upon arrival check into your hotel. Overnight at hotel.

Day 7

DAY 07 || MADURAI

After breakfast visit Palace of Tirumalai Nayak and Meenakshi temple, in the Indo Saraceno style and built in 1636. Although there is currently only the entrance door, the main lobby and the dance room, its visit is worth it because it allows an idea of the luxury of the original building, considered as one of one of the last buildings of greater value in southern India. Later enjoy rickshaw ride that offers a unique way to explore the vibrant streets of this ancient city. You'll experience the bustling local life firsthand as the driver weaves through narrow lanes, busy markets, and historic sites. The rickshaw provides an intimate and convenient way to explore Madurai's sights, from its temples to its lively street scenes. It's an engaging, albeit sometimes chaotic, adventure that captures the essence of the city's dynamic atmosphere and visit to Flower market, located near the Meenakshi Amman Temple. This colorful, fragrant market is a sensory feast, with vendors selling a stunning variety of fresh flowers, including the famous Madurai jasmine. The flowers are used for religious offerings, decorations, and traditional garlands, which play a central role in daily life and festivals in the city. The market bustles with activity, with local women creating intricate flower garlands and bargaining for fresh blooms. The vivid colors and heady fragrance make it one of the most vibrant and picturesque spots in Madurai, offering a glimpse into the city's cultural and spiritual heart.Vegetable market, located near the heart of the city, it is a vibrant space filled with colorful displays of seasonal vegetables, greens, and aromatic herbs. The market is also known for its wide variety of fresh, locally grown produce, including unique regional vegetables that are staples in South Indian cuisine. Vendors, often shouting out their prices and deals, create a dynamic atmosphere, while customers haggle for the best bargains. The vegetable market is not just a place to buy food; it's an immersive experience that showcases the daily life, culinary traditions, and local culture of Madurai. Later visit Gandhi museum is dedicated to the life and legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. It showcases a rich collection of photographs, personal artifacts, and documents related to India's struggle for independence. The museum highlights Gandhi's role in the freedom movement, his philosophy of non-violence, and his visits to Madurai. Evening if anyone is interested optional: another visit to Meenakshi to witness the night aarti ceremony. Overnight at hotel.

Day 8

DAY 08 || MADURAI - CHETTINAD || 95 KMS / 2 HRS

After breakfast check-out and drive to Chettinad, a South Indian region renowned for its vibrant culture, majestic mansions, and flavorful cuisine. Upon arrival, check-in at the hotel. Later, experience the flavor of local life in a bustling and colorful market and sample the distinctive Chettinad cuisine, a rich and aromatic South Indian culinary tradition from the Chettinad region of Tamil Nadu. Known for its bold use of spices, freshly ground masalas, and complex flavors, it features a variety of dishes made with meat (especially chicken and mutton), seafood, and vegetables. Signature ingredients include curry leaves, tamarind, fennel, star anise, and dried red chilies. Chettinad cuisine is celebrated for its fiery curries, fragrant rice dishes, and distinctive blend of heat, tanginess, and depth of flavor. Overnight at hotel.

Day 9

DAY 09 || CHETTINAD

Today discover Chettinad, exploring palatial mansions decorated in Burmese teak and Italian marble. You will visit the Arraynar shrine of Kothadi, lined with terracotta figures, and then visit some of the best local markets in South India. You will have time to admire expert craftsmen at work at the Athangudi handmade tile making unit and the traditional saree weaving centre. Then discover unique antiques from local Chettiar

homes at the market on Muneeswaran Koil Street in Karaikudi. Overnight at hotel.

Day 10

DAY 10 || CHETTINAD - TANJORE || 95 KMS / 2 HRS

After breakfast check-out and drive to Tanjore, known as the Rice Bowl of Tamil Nadu; due to the extensive paddy cultivation, was the cultural capital of the country in 1790. The Cholas, Nayaks and Marathas have shaped this city into a hub of architecture, art and culture. Upon arrival, check-in at the hotel. Afternoon visit Tanjore Palace initially constructed by Thanjavur Nayak kings. Within the palace complex exists a small bell tower and the renowned Saraswathi Mahal Library and art gallery and Brihadeeswarar Temple a UNESCO World Heritage Site is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is amongst one of the largest temples in the country and one of the most beautiful architectural splendors. Overnight at hotel.

Day 11

DAY 11 || TANJORE - PONDICHERRY || 185 KMS / 4 HRS 30 MINS

After breakfast check-out and drive to Pondicherry, known as Puducherry, was under French rule until 1954. The older 'French' part of town is full of quiet, clean streets, lined with bougainvillea-draped colonial-style town houses numbered in an almost logical manner. Upon arrival, check-in at the hotel. After Breakfast check-out from Hotel and drive to Pondicherry. Later proceed for sightseeing of Pondicherry visiting Auroville Ashram & Matri Mandir, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Raj Niwas and Pondicherry Museum. In the evening, visit the picturesque beaches of Pondicherry. Swathed with pristine golden sands and lapped by shimmering waters of the Bay of Bengal, these treasure troves of nature is secluded, quiet and of course, spectacular. Overnight at hotel.

Day 12

DAY 12 || PONDICHERRY – KANCHIPURAM - MAHABALIPURAM || 100 KMS / 2 HRS 30 MINS

After breakfast drive to Mahabalipuram, enroute visit to Kanchipuram, one of the holy cities of India, where there are a lot of huge and spectacular temples of the Pallava dynasty, and the subsequent Chola dynasty. This city is also known for the quality of its silks in Kanchipuram we will visit 2 of its best temples; the Sri Ekambareswarar temple and the Kailashanatha temple. Post visit continue drive to Mahabailpuram also known as Mamallapuram is a coastal town famous for having been the second capital and main sea port of the Pallava kings, of Kanchipuram, whose reign reached its political and artistic apogee between the 5th and 15th centuries. Just from that time the main sites of interest of this town, personalized in monuments and buildings of enormous historical, artistic and architectural value. Among these are laborious carved in rock and bas -reliefs, sculptures and temples, which are scattered by the people themselves and its surroundings. Upon arrival, check-in at the hotel. Rest of the day free at leisure. Overnight at hotel

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Day 13

DAY 13 || MAHABALIPURAM

After breakfast proceed to visit Five Rathas also known as Panch Rathas, is an exemplary set of rock temples. They are excellent examples of the evolution of Dravidian style architecture. Arjuna's Penance is an extract from the Mahabharata, of how Arjuna’s, one of the Pandavas, performed severe austerities in order to obtain Shiva's weapon. Krishna's Butter Ball is a gigantic granite Boulder measuring 6 meters high and 5 meters wide and weighs over 250 tons. It is believed that the rock is a piece of stolen butter dropped by God. Rest of day is free to enjoy the beach and local culture. Overnight at hotel.

Day 14

DAY 14 || MAHABALIPURAM - CHENNAI - DEPARTURE || 145 KMS / 4 HRS & INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT

After breakfast check out and drive to Chennai airport to connect flight to onward destination.
