



The Backwaters and Beaches of Kerala FROM £2189.00 PER PERSON

DAY 01

[DEPARTURE UK]

Departure from London, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle and Glasgow for Cochin via Dubai

DAY 02

[ARRIVE - COCHIN]

Upon arrival at Cochin International airport, a **TCI representative**, waiting in the arrival lounge with a paging board with your name written will meet you. He will assist and transfer you to your hotel.

Kochi (colonial name Cochin) is a vibrant city situated on the south-west coast of the Indian peninsula in the breathtakingly scenic and prosperous state of Kerala, hailed as 'God's Own Country'. Its strategic importance over the centuries is underlined by the sobriquet Queen of the Arabian Sea. Informally, Cochin is also referred to as the Gateway to Kerala.

On arrival, check-in at your hotel.

Rest of the day is at leisure or to take a stroll in the Fort Cochin area.

Overnight: The Gateway Hotel -[Superior sea view room with Breakfast]

http://www.thegatewayhotels.com/TCOKTR_cityfacts.htm

DAY 03

[COCHIN]

Breakfast is at the Hotel.

After breakfast, you will be taken for a half day sightseeing tour of Cochin city. All the sightseeing places are located in the Fort Cochin area itself. Begin with **Dutch Palace** also known as Mattancherry Palace. It was built by the Portuguese and presented to the Raja of

Kochi in 1555 AD. It acquired the present name after 1663 when the Dutch carried out extensions and repairs in the palace. At no time did the Portuguese or Dutch stay here.



Its interiors are decorated with murals from the Ramayana and there are some lively displays of royal costumes and palanquins. **[Closed on Fridays]** Then visit **Jewish Synagogue** built in 1568 AD. The Great Scrolls of the Old Testament, the copper plates in which the grants of privilege made by the Cochin rulers were recorded and the exquisite Chinese hand-painted tiles are of interest here. **[Closed on Friday & Saturday]**

You will also visit **St. Francis Church** in Fort Kochi. The Protestant church was originally built by the Portuguese in 1510 AD and is believed to be the oldest church built by the Europeans in India. It is here the remains of the inveterate traveller, Vasco-da-Gama were initially buried and 14 years later, his mortal remains were taken to Portugal. **Santa Cruz Baslica Church** is also worth visiting. Some beautiful paintings can be seen here.

The **Chinese fishing nets** that line the sea-front and exhibit a mechanical method of catching fish by local fishermen in Fort Kochi is what you will see on your way while returning to your hotel. Said to have been brought from China by traders of Kubalai Khan's Court, they are used at high tide.

In the evening, you will enjoy **Kathakali dance** performance. Kathakali is the classical dance-drama of Kerala, South India, which dates from the 17th century and is rooted in Hindu mythology. The dance has a unique combination of literature, music, painting, acting and dance. It draws heavily from drama and is danced with elaborate masks and costumes. Kathakali recitals are generally long and while other dance forms are more emotive than narrative, Kathakali is both. It combines dance with dialogue to bring myth and legend to life in the temple courtyards of Kerala. The dancers use their stunning costumes and make-up, with the accompaniment of drums and vocalists, to create various moods and emotions.



Overnight: The Gateway Hotel -[Superior sea view room with Breakfast]

http://www.thegatewayhotels.com/TCOKTR_cityfacts.htm

DAY 04

[COCHIN - MUNNAR]

Breakfast is at the Hotel.

After breakfast, you will drive to Munnar [128 Kms / 03 Hrs]

Munnar – is breathtakingly beautiful - a haven of peace and tranquility - the idyllic tourist destination in God's own country. Set at an altitude of 6000 ft in Idukki district, Munnar was the favored summer resort of the erstwhile British rulers in the colonial days. Unending expanse of tea plantations - pristine valleys and mountains- exotic species of flora and fauna in its wild sanctuaries and forests - aroma of spice scented cool air - yes! Munnar has all these and more. It's the place you would love to visit.

On arrival, check-in at your hotel.

The rest of the day is at leisure to relax.

Overnight: Windermere Estate, [Garden room with Breakfast]

<http://www.windmeremunnar.com/>

DAY 05

[MUNNAR]

Breakfast is at the Hotel.

Today you will be having a day at leisure.

Overnight: Windermere Estate, [Garden room with Breakfast]

<http://www.windmeremunnar.com/>

DAY 06

[MUNNAR - THEKKADY]

Breakfast is at the Hotel.

After breakfast, you will drive to Thekkady [100 Kms, 3.5 Hrs]

The drive to Thekkady is enchanting as the road winds through tranquil countryside, rich plantations & thick jungles. **Thekkady** (Idukki district) is the location of the Periyar National Park, which is an important tourist attraction in the Kerala. The Periyar Wildlife sanctuary is spread across 777 km² (300 sq. miles), of which 360 km² (139 sq. miles) is thick evergreen forest. This Wild Life Sanctuary was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1978. The splendid artificial lake formed by the Mulla Periyar Dam across the Periyar River adds to the charm of the park. The greatest attraction of Periyar is the herds of wild elephants that come down to play in the lake. Thekkady is also considered a heaven for natural spices such as black pepper, cardamom, cinnamon and clove.



On arrival, you will check-in at your hotel.

The rest of the day is at leisure.

Overnight: Shalimar Spice Garden Resort,[Standard Villa with Breakfast]

<http://www.shalimarkerala.net/>

DAY 07

[THEKKADY]

Breakfast is at the Hotel.

After breakfast, you will be taken for a **guided walk in the spice plantation**. The spice plantation in Thekkady is a prime attraction of this beautiful land. Though sprawling tea estates cover much of the landscape of Thekkady, plantations of cardamom, rubber, vanilla and coffee are also aplenty. Walk amidst the green, terraced farms of the various spices and breathe in the fragrant air while exploring the spice plantations. Pick up a few packets of the tea and spices grown here that make for a good buy. There are various kinds of spices cultivated in Thekkady. The most abundantly found spice in Thekkady is pepper. But there is a variety of cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, ginger, turmeric and curry leaves on the slanting slopes of the spice plantation in Thekkady.

Later you will have a **common boat cruise on Lake Periyar [subject to availability of tickets]**

for wildlife viewing. The Periyar Lake lies at the heart of the sanctuary, which is a veritable paradise for all wildlife lovers. Situated within the boundaries of the Western Ghats in the southern Indian state of Kerala, Periyar National Park and Tiger Reserve is one of the most captivating wildlife parks in the world. Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary was declared a Project Tiger reserve in 1978. Its unique ecosystem which consists of thick moist deciduous vegetation, dense evergreen forests and the aquatic environment of the Periyar Lake make Periyar a unique and precious wildlife resource.



The animals you can see in Periyar Wildlife sanctuary are tigers, though they remain concealed in the dense jungle and elephants, which can be seen in herds and family groups along the banks of

Periyar Lake. The interaction between the elephants in a herd and their behavior while they drink, bathe and engage in mock fights and play on the lake's edge is a fascinating sight. A boat cruise on Periyar Lake is a good way to observe the elephants from a short distance away, without disturbing them.

Overnight: Shalimar Spice Garden Resort,[Standard Villa with Breakfast]

<http://www.shalimarkerala.net/>

DAY 08

[THEKKADY - ALLEPPEY]

Breakfast is at the Hotel.



After breakfast, you will drive to Alleppey to embark **house-boat** for enjoying an overnight stay. Kettuvallams, the stitched boats provide the best way to experience the colourful backwaters of Kerala. The wood commonly used to make Kettuvallams is 'Anhili', which is found in abundance in central Travancore area. Large planks are tied together using hand made coir ropes and beaten coconut fibres. This gives the Kettuvallams enough strength to withstand heavy waves in the sea. Kettuvallams are built entirely without the use of nails. It requires great skill and adroitness to construct these giant boats by tying

huge planks of jack wood together. The boats are applied with fish oil and cashew nut oil and left to cure for days. With careful maintenance, they last for generations.

These house boats are available in all sizes and shapes, and comprise one or two bedrooms with attached bathrooms, one living room, kitchenette, an open lounge, deck and a crew comprising oarsmen, a cook and guide. The houseboats are generally powered by a small outboard engine, allowing one to cruise along the backwaters.

A sojourn in Kettuvallam, the House boat of Kerala, offers a panoramic view of one of the most picturesque aspects of the God's Own Country. You will cruise through the palm-fringed backwaters, throughout a night in waxing moonlights. All meals will be served on board the house-boat.

The lullaby of the waves and the dazzling delights of the moonlit night will be experienced by spending a night aboard the Kettuvallam.

Overnight: Houseboat [01 Bedroom air conditioned Houseboat]

DAY 09

[ALLEPPEY- KUMARAKOM]

Breakfast is aboard the house-boat.

After breakfast, goodbye your crew members and disembark your house-boat at Alleppey boat jetty.

After breakfast drive to Kumarakom.



The village of **Kumararkom** is a cluster of little islands on the Vembanadu Lake in Kerala. It is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna and is noted for its bird sanctuary where many species of migratory birds visit.

The Vembanadu Lake, the largest backwater in Kerala, is also habitat for many marine and freshwater fish species and it teems with Karimeen, Shrimp and Prawns. It is a major tourist attraction. The gorgeous green of the fringed palms ripple in the blue waters and blend into wavelets.

The people on the banks of Vembanadu Lake are generally peace-loving and follow a neat and healthy lifestyle. Their dressing is immaculate, usually spotless whites. The food mainly consists of rice and fish. Fish is a very important item in their menu for lunch and dinner.

Upon arrival, you will check-in at your hotel.

The rest of the day is at leisure.

Overnight: Taj Garden Retreat [Standard Cottage with Breakfast]

<http://www.tajhotels.com/Leisure/Taj%20Garden%20Retreat,KUMARAKOM/default.htm>

DAY 10

[KUMARAKOM]

Breakfast is at the Hotel.

The day is at leisure to relax or pursue independent activities.

Overnight: Taj Garden Retreat [Standard Cottage with Breakfast]

<http://www.tajhotels.com/Leisure/Taj%20Garden%20Retreat,KUMARAKOM/default.htm>

DAY 11

[KUMARAKOM-KOVALAM]

Breakfast is at Hotel.

Day is at leisure for enjoy the yourself on the beach

Overnight: Taj Green Cove Resort [Standard sea view room with Breakfast]

www.tajhotels.com

DAY

12

-15

[KOVALAM]

Breakfast is at the resort.

The days are at leisure for independent activities or enjoys the day on beach

Overnight: Taj Green Cove Resort [Standard sea view room with Breakfast]



Day 16**[KOVALAM – TRIVANDRUM –UK]**

Breakfast is at the resort.

This morning, you will be met by **TCI** representative and transferred to Trivandrum International airport to board your return flight to the UK.

****** END OF SERVICES ******

WHAT IS INCLUDED

- Scheduled economy class flights
- 13 Nights accommodation on twin occupancy at the hotels mentioned above.
- 1 Night accommodation onboard your private air conditioned house boat
- Meal Plan as stated above. [BB: Bed & Breakfast; FB: All meals]
- City tour of Kochi, Evening Kathakali dance show;
- Visit to Spice plantation , Shared Boat ride in Periyar ;
- All transfers; sightseeing tours & excursions will be by an air-conditioned Toyota Innova [or similar] vehicle;
- Entrance fees, road taxes, parking fee, fuel charges, interstate taxes,
- Porterage on arrival and departure in India
- Services of local English-speaking guide for sightseeing tours;
- TCI representative for assistance on all arrival and departure transfers
- All currently applicable taxes