



A LUXURY JOURNEY TO ENCHANTING SOUTH INDIA

Lush & Green – the States of Kerala & Karnataka are Known as –“God's Own Country”

Led by Susan Drew (Owner: Sangha Tours) February 17 - March 2, 2016

February is peak season & a great time to enjoy South India's sun, sand & spices!

15 DAY ITINERARY: \$3690 double, \$5750 single, immediate deposit: \$900

DAY 1: February 17 – Your flight arrives into Bangalore, India this evening. You'll be met at the airport & transferred to our lovely hotel for the night. (Recommended: Qatar Air) ***(Oberoi Bangalore Hotel)***

DAY 2: February 18 – This morning is free to just relax after the long journey. Enjoy breakfast & maybe take a swim in the pool or visit the hotel spa. In the afternoon we'll have a guided tour of Bangalore. Known as “India's Garden City”, it's also known now as “India's Silicon Valley” - due to its giant tech industry. Our tour will include a visit to Bangalore's Art Museum, as well as a stop at Gangadhareshwara Bull Temple – dedicated to Lord Shiva's loyal bull, Nandi. Bangalore has 2 palaces to see – Tipu Palace (named for the famous king) and Bangalore Palace. We'll get to see some of the city's beautiful parks and visit a local market if time allows. Then it's back to our hotel for drinks and dinner. ***(Oberoi Bangalore Hotel – B)***

DAY 3: February 19 – Early today we'll start driving towards the rolling hills of Coorg - home to one of India's premier coffee and spice regions. On the way we'll stop off in Mysore for lunch and tour one or 2 of its famous palaces, including Mysore Palace. No longer a princely state, the city still retains it's charm with 17 turreted and domed palaces in all. The city is a testament to King Tipu Sultan and his historic victories over the British Army. Also known as the “Sandalwood City” it's said you'll always be surrounded by the sweet smell of sandalwood while there. After lunch we'll drive on to Coorg, arriving in time for some R & R, plus a birding-nature walk late in the day, for those who are interested. Otherwise enjoy a swim or visit the ayurvedic spa before drinks and dinner tonight. Expect to also be treated to a bonfire, along with a local Karnataka cultural performance at our wonderful resort. If you're up to it, ask about a night time nature walk as well. ***(Orange County Resort: Coorg – BD)***

DAY 4: February 20 – After coffee & tea, we'll embark on an early AM walking tour of the resort's coffee and spice fields to see what happens on a working plantation. We'll learn about different types of coffee and you can even help out the workers if you feel like it. After the tour & breakfast, enjoy the spa or a swim – but for some, consider an optional cooking class with the hotel chef focusing on dishes indigenous to the





region. After lunch we'll depart mid-afternoon for a guided tour of Bylekuppe, the 2nd largest Tibetan settlement in India and home to 7,000 monks. With prayer flags blowing in the wind, we'll reach town & visit the grand, golden Buddhist temple. We'll see many monks and do a bit of shopping in their local market. Once back at the resort, we'll be treated to another cultural performance tonight – maybe a nature film - as well as drinks & dinner. Also ask about a night time nature walk. **(Orange County Resort: Coorg – BLD)**

DAY 5: February 21 – If you like, begin the day with some early morning birding, along with a visit to a nearby village for a cup of tea at the local tea shop. Otherwise enjoy a swim or maybe a visit to the spa and then breakfast. Later in the morning we'll head to our sister property, Orange County Kabini, close to Nagarhole National Park. Once we arrive in Kabini, we'll have lunch and then enjoy a round coracle boat ride on the nearby river, with a bullock cart ride too. It's said when you're in a small coracle, you really feel the quiet & gentleness of the river. Once back at the resort we'll enjoy another cultural program tonight. We might be treated to a performance by the local Kuruba tribe - including traditional dancing around a campfire, with drums & flutes. Otherwise it could be a movie about the region's flora and fauna. After drinks & dinner, perhaps ask about an optional night time nature walk. **(Orange County Resort: Kabini - BLD)**

DAY 6: February 22 – We'll begin our day at dawn with an early morning jeep safari ride into Nagarhole National Park. Here we'll be in search of elephant, tiger, leopard, chital, sambar, guar & 300 species of birds. Breakfast follows when we return to the resort. There's plenty of downtime for optional activities today - swimming and the spa – but also spending time with Kaveri, the resort's resident elephant. You can help with her feeding and bathing, as well as ride her along the river banks. Then later in the afternoon we'll head back to Nagarhole NP for a safari boat ride on the Kabini River. The park is home to the largest amount of Asian elephants in the world, so we'll hope to see them drinking at the water's edge – along with otters, marsh crocodiles and plenty of birds. Once back at the resort visit the spa or take a swim before this evening's cultural program, drinks and dinner. **(Orange County Resort: Kabini – BLD)**

DAY 7: February 23 – After breakfast we'll begin a day of driving through some of India's most scenic countryside, leaving the state of Karnataka and heading further south to the state of Kerala. We'll pass through a region of cloud forests, rolling hills and tall trees. Wynad district is famous for its lush scenery, indigenous peoples and spice plantations – especially cardamom. We'll also pass by tall rubber trees, small farms, scenic towns and bright green tea plantations - stopping at one for a tour. We might even see some animals in the wild such as: elephants, langurs and monkeys. We'll bring a box lunch with us, stopping for a picnic and then continue on our scenic drive towards Cochin and our lovely hotel, situated right at the juncture of the Arabian Sea & Kerala's famous backwaters. Upon arrival, we'll have time for a swim or a spa visit before drinks and dinner tonight. **(Taj Malabar Hotel - BL)**





DAY 8: February 24 – After breakfast today, we'll drive to a section of Kerala's backwaters, where we'll board a small reed boat to explore the narrow canals of this most enchanting area. We'll glide through narrow palm tree lined lagoons, as we observe village life along the backwaters. We'll take in the local flora and fauna, but mostly we'll experience the quiet and gentleness of the backwaters. We'll have a chance to visit a local village to see how the people live & work, followed by a traditional lunch served on a banana leaf. After a bit more time on the waterways, we'll head back to the city to see some of the historical sights in the port city of Cochin. Once colonized by both the Portuguese and the Dutch, their influence is still strong. We'll visit the Dutch Palace (known as Mattancherry), some churches, a synagogue and pass by many houses reflecting European traditions. Later we'll walk along the Arabian Sea to watch fishermen raising their Chinese fishing nets, as they've done for 100 years. Then it's back to our hotel for drinks and dinner - or we could decide on an early meal in the city. **(Taj Malabar Hotel – BL)**

DAY 9: February 25 – Today is a free day to enjoy various options. Maybe have some downtime at our hotel to enjoy the pool or spa. Perhaps follow that up by a free backwaters cruise - offered daily by the hotel after tea time, on their own boat and to an area nearby the hotel. You can also return to Cochin for some shopping or head south to one of the local beaches. If you want a full day tour with a scenic ride to India's premier tea region of Munnar it can be arranged, including lunch and a visit to the tea museum. There are additional small village tours & boating tours to take – as well as a full day Muzris Tour to see various temples, churches, markets and 65 live temple elephants (but not to be ridden). Then have dinner at the hotel or in town tonight. The day is totally up to you! **(Taj Malabar Hotel – B)**

DAY 10: February 26 – After breakfast we'll be picked up and taken to our backwaters cruise ship – the Oberoi Vrinda – for the start of a 2 night luxury cruise through Kerala's most famous backwaters. Once we arrive we'll have lunch and embark on a 4 hour cruise through the scenic waterways. Then we'll return to Vembanad Lake at sunset, for drinks and dinner. We'll also be treated to a sacred dance performance of the Kathakali Dance. Starting with the application of elaborate make-up, the dancers tell the tales of some of India's ancient Hindu epics stories – all based on various traditional Ayurvedic principles. Enjoy a very relaxing evening on board your cruise ship tonight! **(Oberoi Vrinda - BLD)**

DAY 11: February 27 - Today our backwaters cruise continues south towards Alleppey, while breakfast is served on board. Observe what life is like along the waterways and note that even farming can be done below sea level. Later we'll leave the Vrinda, boarding a traditional small rice boat to glide through narrow sections of the backwaters. With a guide we'll also visit the half statue of the Karumadi Buddha, followed by a stop at a traditional family residence called a Kerala tharavad. Once back on board, lunch will be served, as the ship passes through more scenic areas of the backwaters and Alleppey: "The Venice of the East".





As the Vrinda returns to Vembanad Lake, maybe ask the chef about a brief cooking class before tonight's musical concert of classical Indian instruments, followed by drinks and dinner. **(Oberoi Vrinda – BLD)**

Day 12: February 28 – The Vrinda leaves Vembanad Lake, heading south past Pallathurathy. Breakfast will be served on board, with check-out at 10 AM. Then we'll be picked up & driven to nearby Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary for an hour-long guided nature walk, seeing many local birds & stretching our legs before our drive south along the coast. We'll stop for lunch and continue on to Kovalam Beach, India's top beach resort. After arriving at our lovely seaside hotel, we can take a walk on the beach, a swim in the pool or head to the ayurvedic spa before drinks and dinner tonight. **(Vivanta by Taj Resort: Green Cove - B)**

DAY 13: February 29 – Today is a free day for all to enjoy some of the activities at the hotel. The hotel offers: biking, cooking classes, kayaking, boat rides on the lagoon, yoga classes, swimming, all kinds of spa treatments & more. You can also spend the morning there, along with an optional afternoon tour to nearby Trivandrum. The tour would include visiting the Horse Palace, Shri Padmanabha Temple, Nepear Museum, various shops & local markets. You could also arrange to visit to a few villages nearby the hotel. Choose to have dinner anywhere you like. This is your free day! **(Vivanta by Taj Resort: Green Cove - B)**

DAY 14: March 1 – Today is another day to enjoy the many activities the hotel has to offer, with time to do things not done before. An optional half-day tour to Poovar can be arranged, to see its estuary and explore one more section of Kerala's backwaters on a final cruise. It's also the last day of the tour, so it's a great time for everyone to meet together for drinks & dinner. If you want to stay a bit longer in India, it can be arranged. For sure, enjoy your last day in South India! **(Vivanta by Taj Resort: Green Cove - B)**

DAY 15: March 2 – You'll be driven to Trivandrum Airport today for your flight home - or fly onward to see other parts of India. Have a good trip! (Note: extra charge for airport transfers if less than 4 people)

Hotel Add-Ons: **Chennai:Taj, Darjeeling:Mayfair, Delhi:Oberoi Trident Gurgaon, Dharamsala:Chonor House**

Check: www.sanghatours.net, www.oberoihotels.com, www.orangecounty.in, www.tajhotels.com

Note: Deposits are due immediately with final payments due by 11/17 to avoid a \$100 late charge. There's a \$100 non-refundable deposit when signing up for the tour. Cancellation policy: 50% refund 90-31 days before the tour begins - no refund after 30 days. 10 people minimum are needed for the tour to operate at the printed price - fewer people could increase the cost by approx. \$200 per person.

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