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SOUTHERN INDIA TOUR

15 Day Conducted Tour

only **\$3,995** per person twin share

This price includes airport taxes & levies

This price is great value as it includes all of the following:

- ◆ Air fares from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane into Chennai and out of Cochin with Singapore Airlines and Silk Air.
- ◆ An extensive two week overland tour of Southern India including Pondicherry, Chettinad, Periyar and much more. The tour visits several UNESCO World Heritage Sites, a wildlife sanctuary, a tea and spice plantation and an overnight cruise on the Backwaters of Allepey in a houseboat.
- ◆ Good accommodation, mainly 3 to 4½ star.
- ◆ Many meals.
- ◆ Entrance fees to many attractions.
- ◆ All transport and transfers.



- ◆ Prepaid gratuities for the guide and drivers.
- ◆ Services of Indian tour guides and if there are 15 or more participants there will be an Australian tour escort.

If you don't have a travel partner but wish to travel at twin share rates, we will try and assign you with another person but this is not guaranteed. If you require a single room is an extra charge of \$1,180.

It is planned to restrict the number of participants to a maximum of approximately 22 people.

**Tour departs Australia on the 19th February
and returns 4th March 2020**

We try harder to find you the best travel deal

Itinerary for Southern India Tour

Included meals are indicated as B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

19.02.20 Australia – Singapore – Chennai, India

Depart Brisbane at 9.10am on SQ 256, arriving in Singapore at 3.10pm.

Depart Melbourne at 10.35am on SQ 238, arriving in Singapore at 3.15pm.

Depart Sydney at 12.15pm on SQ 232, arriving in Singapore at 5.35pm.

All passengers depart Singapore at 8.20pm on SQ 528, arriving in Chennai at 10.00pm.

Upon arrival in Chennai we are met and transferred to the hotel for a two night stay.

Chennai is the capital of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and is situated on the Bay of Bengal in eastern India.

Accommodation: GRT Grand, T.Nagar

20.02.20 Chennai

(B/D) This morning we enjoy a city tour to see and experience the city's rich architectural and cultural wealth. We begin with a visit to the Government Museum and Art Gallery.

Later we will visit Fort St George, built in 1644, and then the San Thome Cathedral.

Dinner this evening is at the hotel.

Accommodation: GRT Grand, T.Nagar

21.02.20 Chennai – Kanchipuram - Mahabalipuram

(B/D) After breakfast we depart for Kanchipuram, the Golden City of a thousand temples and once the capital of the Pallavas, the Cholas and the Rayas of Vijayanagar Empire. We visit the beautiful temple, built during the 6th and 7th century, by the Pallavas.

Afterwards we continue to Mahabalipuram. Upon arrival we check into our hotel.

Dinner this evening is at the hotel.

Accommodation: Ideal Beach Resort

22.02.20 Mahabalipuram – Pondicherry

(B/D) This morning we have a tour of Mahabalipuram, which was previously known as Mamallapuram. We visit the famous rock cut temples and the 7th century Shore Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The beauty of this area is not only due to the wonderful architecture but also the vast casuarina trees, the silvery sandy beach and the classical handmade crafts. With its picturesque location on a rocky outcrop between the beach and a lagoon, this area is a happy combination of history, good beaches, hassle-free tourism and fabulous fish and lobster. It is renowned for its series of charming Rathas and the spectacular carved relief depicting Arjuna's Penance. The magnificent Shore Temple built by King Rajasimha in the 7th century houses the shrines of both Shiva and Vishnu. The Krishna Manadapam has a bas-relief of Lord Krishna lifting the Govardhan Hill on his fingertips. Later we have a two hour drive to Pondicherry, a French colony on the coastline of India. The city has a pleasant beach promenade and many historical monuments. On arrival in Pondicherry we visit The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with some beautiful stained glass windows depicting the life of Jesus. We also visit the Pondicherry Museum, home to some of the most exquisite collections of architecture and sculpture.

We have an overnight stay at our hotel. Dinner this evening is included.

Accommodation: Accord Puducherry

23.02.20 Pondicherry – Thanjavur

(B/D) After breakfast this morning we have a 4½ hour drive to Thanjavur.

On arrival we have a brief tour of Tanjore, which is known as a place for art lovers, especially those who love temple architecture and the kings who erected these magnificent monuments. During their reign, the Cholas made significant contributions to the various fields of art and architecture. The Brihadeeswara Temple, the wonderful Palace, Art Gallery and the Saraswati Mahal Library are some of the other things to see in Tanjore.

We have an overnight stay in Thanjavur. Dinner this evening is at the hotel.

Accommodation: Ideal River View Resort

24.02.20 Thanjavur – Tiruchirappalli – Chettinad

(B/D) Today we depart Thanjavur to Chettinad. En-route we pass the city of Tiruchirappalli, witnessing its rich cultural heritage manifested in its awe-inspiring temples, such as the Rock Fort Temple, which we will pass and the Srirangam, one of the largest temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Upon arrival in Chettinad we check into our hotel for an overnight stay. Dinner this evening is included.

Accommodation: Chidambaram Vilas

25.02.20 Chettinad – Madurai

(B/D) After breakfast we explore the local area of Chettinad and Karaikudi. Karaikudi and 74 other villages comprise Chettinad, the homeland of the Nattukottai Chettiars. Their legacies are the fascinating houses that have to be seen to be believed. It also offers extensive antique shopping, weekly shandy (village market), a number of temples, numerous craftsmen working with wood and metal, silversmiths and goldsmiths, attractive textiles and most importantly the exciting Chettinad Cuisine.

We will see the Chettinadu Mansion, which was built in 1902. This 100 year old architectural marvel is one of the hidden treasures of Tamil Nadu. It's 100 rooms and sheer size of the marriage hall, tall pillars, beautiful balconies, and hidden lofts the size of a large room in the false ceilings are features typical of a bygone era of gracious living. Here we learn the living style of the Chettiars, the business tycoons of the South who made their livelihood in Burma in the last century.

Later we proceed to Madurai and check into our hotel. This evening witness the Aarti ceremony lighting of lamps and prayers, at the Meenakshi Temple. (Please note a strict dress code is required for this visit and no cameras are permitted).

Dinner tonight is at the hotel.

Accommodation: Heritage Madurai

26.02.20 Madurai – Periyar

(B/D) After breakfast we experience the rich cultural heritage of Madurai, at the Meenakshi Temple, whose soaring towers are covered with stucco figures of deities, mythical animals and monsters painted in vivid colours. The temple is dedicated to the consort of Lord Shiva, with its towers rising high above the surrounding township. We also visit the Tirumala Nayak Palace, built in 1636, by King Thirumalai Nayak with the help of an Italian architect. Later we have a 3½ hour drive to Periyar. Upon arrival we check into the hotel for a two night stay. Dinner this evening is at the hotel.

Accommodation: Cardamom County, Kumily

27.02.20 Periyar

(B/D) This morning after a leisurely breakfast, we visit the Periyar Spice and Ayurvedic Garden,

to see the cultivation of these wonderful plants.

In the afternoon we have a boat ride through the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary. It is one of the finest sanctuaries for studying the Indian Elephant in its home environment. Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary has a picturesque lake at the heart of the sanctuary. Formed with the building of a dam in 1895, this reservoir meanders around the contours of the wooded hills, providing a permanent source of water for the local wildlife. In the lap of the mountains, the environment of the sanctuary is like a canvas of many shades. The fresh air of the moist deciduous forest gives one a chance to experience the peace and serenity and long to return for more. The rest of the day is at leisure to relax or explore the local village. Dinner this evening is at the hotel.

Accommodation: Cardamom County, Kumily

28.02.20 Periyar – Munnar

(B/L/D) After a relaxed breakfast we depart on a four hour drive to Munnar. Munnar is situated at the confluence of three mountain streams at an altitude of approximately 1600m above sea level. This hill station was once the summer resort of the British Government in South India. Sprawling tea plantations, picture-book towns, winding lanes and holiday facilities make this a popular resort town. Munnar also has the highest mountain peak in South India, Anamudi, which towers over the area at a height of 2,695 metres.

Upon arrival in Munnar we check into our hotel and have an included lunch.

This afternoon we visit the Tata Tea Museum. In the evening we enjoy a visit to the market and church. Dinner tonight is at the hotel.

Accommodation: The Silver Tips, Iddukki

29.02.20 Munnar – Kumarakom

(B/D) Today we check out of the hotel and commence our 4½ hour drive to Kumarakom. Kumarakom is called ‘One of the Ten Paradises on Earth’ by National Geographic Traveller. Kumarakom is a stunningly beautiful cluster of backwaters and fishing villages set against the backdrop of the Vembanad Lake in Kerala. This tranquil emerald peninsula is part of the Kuttanad region and is 13km from Kottayam.

An enchanting backwater destination, Kumarakom is truly one of the gems of Kerala, offering travellers exotic sights of flora and fauna, boat cruises and fishing experiences. The area has gorgeous palms, coconut groves, lush paddy fields, kettuvalloms (traditional rice barges), rafts and canoes, rich marine life and panoramic views of the backwaters with their intricate waterways and canals. The rest of the day is at leisure. Dinner this evening is at the hotel.

Accommodation: Lakesong Resort, Ammankari Road

01.03.20 Kumarakom – Allepey

(B/L/D) This morning after breakfast we board our private houseboat(s) for a cruise through the backwaters of Allepey, which is one of the lowest lying areas in India. The Kuttanad region of Kerala is called the rice bowl of the state, where the rice is actually grown on water-filled fields reclaimed from the sea. The area has endless stretches of paddy fields, small streams and canals, bridges, a silver beach, serene lagoons and emerald coconut palms. The town has at least six navigable canals that are its lifeline, connecting the city to the intricate thread of backwater trails and earning it the name ‘the Venice of the East’. Allepey lies between the Arabian Sea and a vast network of rivers flowing into it, explaining its unique blend of fresh and saltwater eco-systems. Traditionally, the Kettuvalloms were old barges used to ferry rice and spices. Today they are modified houseboats equipped with comfortable facilities, giving guests a unique way to explore the gorgeous backwaters. On the cruise we will likely see villagers go about their

traditional occupations such as fishing and agriculture.

Each boat has a fully equipped kitchen and an experienced cook to prepare authentic Kerala cuisine with seafood specialities and fresh vegetables. The waterways of Kerala play a major role in the economy of the state as they link remote villages and islands with the mainland. Lunch and dinner are included today.

Accommodation: Evergreen Superior Houseboat

02.03.20 Allepey – Cochin

(B/D) After breakfast this morning we say goodbye to our houseboat and proceed on a two hour drive to Cochin. Cochin is situated on the south-west coast of the Indian Peninsula in Kerala. Its importance over the centuries as a strategic maritime centre has earned it the name 'Queen of the Arabian Sea'. Cochin is also called the 'Gateway to Kerala'. Over the centuries the Arabs, British, Chinese, Dutch and Portuguese have left their imprint on the trade, history, heritage, culture and development of the city in the form of a rich and cosmopolitan legacy. Cochin is perfectly flanked by the stunning Western Ghats mountain range to the east and the lovely Arabian Sea to the west.

Upon arrival in Cochin we check into the hotel for a two night stay. This evening we enjoy an enthralling performance of Kathakali, which is an ancient dance drama of Kerala and is one of the oldest theatre forms in the world. Performances are traditionally based on themes from Hindu mythology, especially the two epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Kathakali has an unbelievably elaborate make-up ritual that takes hours to complete. The colours used in the make-up are determined by the nature of the characters depicted by the dancers. Dinner this evening is at the hotel.

Accommodation: Crowne Plaza Kochi, Kundanoor

03.02.20 Cochin – Singapore

(B/D) This morning we enjoy a tour of Cochin. The Fort Kochi Heritage Zone is wonderfully cosmopolitan, with a beautiful mix of Malayali Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Jews. Fort Kochi is where the influence of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British can be seen the most. The area has charming old-world streets and buildings. See the ancient Chinese fishing nets (Cheenavala), distinctly unique to Cochin. It is believed that traders from China introduced these nets here. Remarkably, outside of China, these nets are found only in Cochin. The St. Francis Church is said to be India's oldest European church. It was originally built by Portuguese friars in 1503. Vasco da Gama was buried in this church in 1524 before his remains were moved to Portugal. The Dutch Palace (Mattancherry Palace) was built by the Portuguese in 1555 as a gift for the Maharaja of Cochin. It was renovated again by the Dutch in 1663. Now the Palace houses rare royal memorabilia and artefacts and a series of fine murals depicting scenes from the Hindu epics Mahabharata and Ramayana.

We have a 6pm late checkout from our hotel rooms before being transferred to a hotel restaurant near the airport for a farewell dinner. After dinner we are transferred to the airport for our flights home.

All passengers depart Cochin at 10.55pm on Silk Air flight MI 467, arriving in Singapore at 6.00am the next morning (04.03.20).

04.03.20 Singapore – Australia

Brisbane passengers depart Singapore at 7.15am on SQ 265, arriving in Brisbane at 4.55pm.

Sydney passengers depart Singapore at 7.05am on SQ 241, arriving in Sydney at 5.55pm.

Melbourne passengers depart Singapore at 7.45am on SQ 207, arriving in Melbourne at 6.10pm.

Note: Most of the included meals for this tour will be at hotels. Due to limited eating facilities at many destinations in Southern India, lunch periods can vary considerably from day to day. This should be kept in mind for anyone who requires strict eating times.

Tour Difficulty Ratings & Advice

For your enjoyment of the tour, and also the enjoyment of your fellow travellers, please consider whether or not the suggested difficulty level for the tour you are interested in is compatible with your health and fitness.

1	2	3	4	5
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Tour Difficulty Level 3

This tour rating typically involves a good level of physical activity, such as ascending stairs, getting into a bathtub shower, being responsible for your own luggage at airports and hotels, walking distances of up to 500 metres at a time over possible uneven ground and/or cobblestone streets. Walking tours of considerable distances should be expected on tours with this rating as well as some early departures.



Conditions for Macleay Valley Travel's Southern India Tour

Deposits and Payments - A non-refundable deposit of \$400 per person is payable within 7 days of booking. This deposit is not refundable should you later cancel. The balance is payable in full 8 weeks prior to departure. Macleay Valley Travel often has to adhere to strict payment deadlines and your booking on the tour may be cancelled if final payment is not received by the due date, with no refund applicable.

Refunds and Cancellations - Cancellations after final payment will result in a refund limited to whatever we can recoup from the airline.

Airline Tickets - Please note that any changes made to airline tickets once they have been issued will likely incur high cancellation and/or reissue fees. These fees are typically set by the airline and are outside of our control.

Insurance - Adequate travel insurance is essential. We can arrange this for you if desired. Macleay Valley Travel offers Suresave Travel Insurance. Please note that we can only process your travel insurance when we have received full payment for the insurance and the signed Suresave Travel Insurance application form, located on the last page of the Suresave Travel Insurance information booklet. Until this time the travel insurance cannot be processed and will not be valid. Macleay Valley Travel will bear no responsibility for any consequences that may occur as a result of an incomplete insurance application.

Passports - All travellers require a current passport with at least 6 months left on it at the end of the tour. Non-Australian passport holders require a re-entry visa for Australia. An Indian eVisa is required for Australian passport holders and can be obtained at <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>

The current price is USD \$80 per eVisa. Please note that this price is subject to change.

Basic Tour Price and Taxes - Air taxes and fuel levies are included in the basic tour price if the tour is paid in full on or before the due date on the final invoice. Macleay Valley Travel reserves the right to charge for any increase in air taxes and fuel levies if the tour is not paid in full by the due date.

Not Included in the Cost - Travel insurance and all items of a personal nature such as telephone calls, drinks, excess baggage, tips, meals, (except those specified in the itinerary), etc are not included in the cost. Similarly, credit card payments (Visa/MasterCard) can only be accepted if 1% is added to the price to help defray the heavy merchant fees charged to us by the credit card companies. There is a 2.75% surcharge for American Express.

Breakaway Fee - All fully inclusive prices are based on group travel and any deviation from the set itinerary will incur a breakaway fee. The breakaway fee for deviations on this tour is \$55 per person, plus any increase in airfare. Please inquire with our office for specific prices on any extensions.

Health and Fitness - Macleay Valley Travel recommends that the passenger is reasonably healthy and/or fit to participate in this tour. Persons with a disability requiring special assistance must be accompanied by a companion. Macleay Valley Travel and their representatives cannot provide this service. The Health & Fitness Questionnaire located on the last page of this itinerary needs to be completed in full by each passenger and accompany your booking form. Macleay Valley Travel reserves the right to accept/decline or terminate a passenger's participation in the tour under certain circumstances. Macleay Valley Travel is not permitted to provide medical advice as to vaccinations/injections which you may require for this tour and advise you to consult your local medical practitioner for specific medical advice. There are no compulsory injections required for this tour.

Accreditation - Macleay Valley Travel is a fully accredited travel agency under the AFTA (Australian Federation of Travel Agents) ATAS - AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme. As such, you are assured of a consumer focused and quality assured business, ensuring professional conduct and ethical business practices. We are happy for any prospective traveller with us to check us out with your local Consumer Affairs (Fair Trading) department.

Twin Share Bookings - If you do not have a travel partner, but wish to travel at twin share rates, we will try and assign you with another traveller but this is not guaranteed. We assign passengers by their gender, on a first come, first served basis and do not assign twin share passengers according to their age, profession, interests etc. There are risks with sharing a room with a person you do not know, and Macleay Valley Travel accepts no responsibility if you are incompatible with your assigned room mate. Additionally, if you are assigned a travelling companion to share with and they cancel off the tour prior to making the final payment, then you will either be required to pay the single room supplement or we will try our best to assign you with another twin share passenger, if one is available.

Limitation of Liability - As Macleay Valley Travel acts only as agent for the Airlines, Hotels, Coach Companies etc., providing accommodation, transportation and other services, Macleay Valley Travel shall not be liable or responsible for death or injury to any person or loss or damage to any property including baggage arising out of or connection with any transportation, accommodation or other services, or resulting directly or indirectly from acts of God, fire, breakdown in machinery or equipment, acts of Government or other authorities, de jure or defacto wars, whether declared or not, hostilities, civil disturbances, strikes, riots, thefts, epidemics, quarantines, medical or customs regulations, delays or cancellations caused by changes in schedules or itinerary, or over bookings or defaults or for any causes beyond Macleay Valley Travel's control or any loss or damage resulting from improper or insufficient passports, visas or other documents and neither Macleay Valley Travel, and its servants or employees shall be or become liable or responsible for any additional expenses or liability sustained or incurred by the tour member as a result of the foregoing causes. Additionally you must meet the entry requirements for each country you visit. Macleay Valley Travel will not be liable if you are denied entry to a country for any reason, including a past criminal history. Macleay Valley Travel reserves the right to decline bookings made for any group tour. Any tour booking confirmation is conditional, contingent on our view of the ability of a person to be able to participate in a tour without the likelihood of conflict between members of a tour whether perceived or actual.

Macleay Valley Travel reserves the right to modify the itinerary or the accommodation if circumstances make this necessary, provided that the amended itinerary is of equal value or greater value than that of the original program.

MACLEAY VALLEY TRAVEL - BOOKING FORM

PLEASE PRINT DETAILS CLEARLY IN BLOCK LETTERS AND ALSO

A PHOTOCOPY OF YOUR PASSPORT MUST BE SENT WITH BOOKING FORM

Name of Tour : _____ Departure Date: _____

Passenger 1 (as written in passport) _____

Title: **Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss. Dr.** _____ Age: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Passenger 2 (as written in passport) _____

Title: **Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss. Dr.** _____ Age: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Postal Address: _____

_____ **PostCode** _____ **Email** _____

Telephone / Fax Number: _____ **Mobile** _____

Passport Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____

Passport Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____

Passport Nationality: _____ Preferred Name: _____

Passport Nationality _____ Preferred Name: _____

(Passport must have 6 months validity from the time of tour completion)

Single room / Twin beds / Double bed: (Room type is subject to availability)

Circle which airport you wish to depart from: SYDNEY / MELBOURNE / BRISBANE

Special Dietary Requests – Passenger 1: _____ Passenger 2: _____

Optional Extensions: _____

Would you like receive details of our travel insurance?: YES / NO (Please Circle)

Any existing medical conditions – Passenger 1: _____ Passenger 2: _____

In case of emergency, please notify :

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Please return this sheet with your non-refundable deposit of \$400 per person and the health & fitness form.

DECLARATION. I have read and understand fully the booking conditions and I accept them.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

A copy of passport is required to verify spelling of name; If this is not provided and the information we have for the airline is incorrect and ticket is issued, then the airline will charge a reissue fee.

HEALTH & FITNESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Macleay Valley Travel strives to make our tours enjoyable experiences for all passengers, however some countries and tour services lack the standards that you can typically expect in Australia.

To help ensure your personal safety and enjoyment on tour, please answer the following questions. The information you provide will be treated confidentially and will be used to check that the transportation, accommodation and facilities on tour are suitable for you:

1. Do you have any allergies? Yes / No
If yes, please provide details and severity: _____
2. Can you walk 500 metres to 1km in distance comfortably and unaided? Yes / No
3. Can you negotiate uneven, undulating and sometimes challenging terrain? Yes / No
If no, please provide details about these limitations: _____
4. Do you use a mobility aid? Yes / No
If yes, please provide details: _____
5. Are you travelling with a companion or carer who is able to provide all the assistance you need to enter buildings, disembark and embark ships, aircraft, coaches, small boats and assist you on excursions? Yes / No
If yes, please provide the name of your carer/companion and your relationship to them: _____
6. Are you taking any medical equipment to assist you? Yes / No
If yes, please provide details: _____
7. Do you suffer from any condition which may cause you to experience memory loss or become disoriented? Yes / No
If yes, please provide details: _____
8. Are you asthmatic or do you have other breathing difficulties? Yes / No
If yes, please provide details (travelling to high altitudes is not recommended): _____
9. Do you require supplementary oxygen? Yes / No
10. Are you currently taking medication? Yes / No
If yes, are you able to administer your own medication? Yes / No
11. If you have any other medical information that is not covered in the previous questions, please provide a description here: _____

The information you supply us will be passed onto relevant travel suppliers who will do their best accommodate you. However, it is very important to remember that meeting your needs cannot be guaranteed, especially when travelling to third world countries.

DISCLAIMER

I confirm that the information provided on this questionnaire is both true and correct and I understand that there is no guarantee that all these needs will or can be met. I agree that Macleay Valley Travel may offer a recommendation with regard to fitness to travel, based on the information I have provided. I also understand that this information may be passed onto those responsible for supplying the land arrangements for my travel, and that my information will not be communicated to any party which is not directly responsible or otherwise associated with my travel arrangements. I further confirm and agree that should I choose not to disclose information which subsequently requires me to return or be returned home from a tour or cruise, Macleay Valley Travel is not responsible for any costs associated with cancellation penalties, airfares, land transportation or any other related hardship. Please note that a refund for lost touring cannot be claimed. I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to update the information I provided to Macleay Valley Travel immediately should my circumstances change.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Signature: _____

Date: _____