



WENDY WU TOURS

Tour Dossier

KERALA AND SOUTHERN HIGHLIGHTS 18 DAYS

This document was designed to be read in conjunction with our other pre-departure information provided after you have made a booking with Wendy Wu Tours. It aims to provide a straightforward description of the physical activities involved in sightseeing or travelling during the tour. All passengers should read this dossier to confirm their ability to complete the tour. This is not your final Itinerary and therefore does not mention all the sites visited.

Tour Grade – Medium paced tour

This is defined in our brochure as: “These tours are not strenuous but do include several days where long periods of walking and climbing steps will be necessary. These tours are not recommended for those that are unable to walk for prolonged periods without assistance. These tours are generally longer in length and could involve long days of driving.”

Anyone with a good level of fitness should be able to complete this itinerary. Of course, our local guides always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance, but they cannot be expected to cater for passengers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

The more tiring aspects of this itinerary are some lengthy driving distances and optional sightseeing, such as the optional hike within Periyar National Park.

Climbing steps

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves the climbing of steps. These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemy once they were inside. The stairs tend to be quite large, uneven and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to walk up/down steps inside.

Finally, the old hill station towns like Ooty, Coonoor and Munnar, are located at a higher and cooler elevation and were developed as resorts to escape the heat of the lowland. They are usually made up of interconnecting roads, steps and sloped pathways.

Group size

In most cases, the group size will operate with a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 18 passengers.

Itinerary changes

1. Order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

Altitude

This itinerary visits the highlands, old hill stations and a wildlife sanctuary located in the mountainous area called the Western Ghats. From Mysore to Kumarakom, you will spend 5 days at a moderate altitude; the highest being in Ooty at 2240m [7350feet]. Refer to section below for altitudes reached each day.

These are considered to be moderate, rather than high altitudes and people rarely have any trouble with this. Your group will be driving up into the highlands and therefore ascending gradually in altitude, which is one of the best ways to minimise the effects of AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness). It is recommended to drink more (water, non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated drinks) and avoid exertion after arriving at altitude. However if you have an existing respiratory, vascular or coronary condition, we recommend checking with your Doctor before undertaking this itinerary.

Mild symptoms of AMS occur in some people and include dizziness, fatigue, nausea or loss of appetite, breathlessness or headache. These usually develop over the first 36 hrs at altitude and not immediately on arrival. AMS symptoms are experienced by people of varying ages and levels of fitness, and usually the symptoms will subside after a day or so. If symptoms worsen, you should seek medical advice and descend in altitude immediately.

Appropriate dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in non-revealing clothes. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts that sit well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a ‘modesty shawl’ in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which is worn over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques.

When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout India – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few - *require all*

visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or uneven ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are ‘shoe minders’ who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a ‘tip’ – this is not compulsory so each passenger can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove them, you will have to remain outside.

Bring some shoes that are easily slipped on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot ground.

The section below will indicate when you need to consider these.

Alternative modes of transport

You will take a ride on the **toy train** to travel between Ooty and Coonoor. In Munnar, the group bus is unable to pass under the bridge and so you will travel by **jeep** to and from the hotel, and while sightseeing. Refer to Your Travel Guide India for further information.

The narrow roads of the highlands, especially those leading up to the hill stations or through the national parks can be difficult for the larger buses to negotiate. In Bangalore, you will therefore change to a smaller sized bus for the remainder of the tour. This will still have ample room underneath the vehicle and overhead racks to store your luggage.

Alternative accommodation

In Kerala, you will be staying overnight on board a traditional style houseboat called a kettavallum. Refer to Your Travel Guide India for further information.

Tipping

If there are less than 10 people in your group, please allow NZD\$175 each for tipping. If there are more than 10, please allow NZD\$145 each for tipping. These amounts *do not include hotel portage* so if you would like your luggage to be carried to your hotel room this will be at your discretion.

Electricity

The supply of electricity on board the kettavallum houseboat (Day 13) is limited, and can be unreliable in the hill stations and highlands (Days 7 to 13). Refer to Your Travel Guide's ELECTRICITY section.

Rail journeys

You will take a day train in AC2 chair class (Day 4) - refer to Your Travel Guide's TRANSPORT and EATING IN INDIA sections for more information.

Getting on and off the trains in India can be quite disordered and amusing as passengers will start boarding well before people have finished getting off! If your group is disembarking at a stop that is not the end of the line, the train will only stop for 10mins and you must have your luggage ready and by your side a few minutes before the train pulls into the station.

NB: Times and distances listed in this section are approximations only.

Day 1: New Zealand/Chennai

You will be met in the airport arrivals hall tonight by your Airport Guide / National Escort, together with any other passengers from your group who may be arriving at a similar time. Transfer (½ hr drive) to your hotel and check-in.

Day 2: Chennai.

After a late rise this morning, today's sightseeing involves approx 4 to 5 hrs on foot. Please note that parking is not allowed at Marina Beach so you will not be able to disembark here, just drive past it.

Day 3: Chennai/Kanchipuram/Mamallapuram

Drive 64km south to Kanchipuram for easy sightseeing and shopping time. Then drive 1 ½ hrs (66km) to Mamallapuram; at the rock carvings sightseeing involves approx 2 hrs on foot. Drive 1 ¾ hrs (50km) back to Chennai.

Day 4: Chennai/Bangalore

This morning we have a very early rise (usually 0430am!) to catch the train to Bangalore (journey takes approx 4 ½ hrs). You will be given a simple, light breakfast as well as beverages whilst on the train. However if you require additional food, please purchase the day prior. From Bangalore station, transfer to hotel and check in if rooms are available. Easy sightseeing this afternoon.

Day 5: Bangalore/Hassan

This morning, you will change to a smaller bus. Check out from hotel and drive 3 ½hrs (163km) to Sravanabelagola Jain pilgrimage centre – refer to **Appropriate Dress** section above. Sightseeing to see Bahubali Statue involves about 2 ½ hrs on foot: You will need to climb some steps that are not necessarily steep, but are

uneven and sometimes slippery; there are also sections without handrails. This is quite a long walk in the open, with little shade available, however you will still be required to remove your shoes. Bring a pair of old, thick socks to protect your feet, drinking water and sun protection. There are sedan chairs* that you can take one or both ways (at passenger's own cost). Continue driving 1 ¼hrs (50km) to Hassan. After lunch, there is further easy sightseeing before checking in at hotel.
*A chair borne on two poles carried by two or four people.

Day 6: Hassan/Mysore

Mysore altitude – 800 to 1020m [2624 to 3346feet]

Drive 3hrs (130km) to Mysore and commence sightseeing of Mysore Palace/Chamudi hill with approx 3hrs on foot. There is a temple and mosque inside the complex – refer to **Appropriate Dress** section above. Drive to hotel and check in overnight.

Day 7: Mysore/Coonoor

Coonoor altitude - 1850m [6070feet]

Drive 05-06 hrs to the beautiful hill station of Coonoor and check in. Visit of Sims Park in Coonoor, botanical Garden/ boat club in Ooty.

Day 8: Coonoor-Ooty (Toy Train)

Ooty altitude - 2240m [7350feet]

Transfer a short distance to the station at 1040 hrs to board the 'toy train'. The journey to another Nilgiri Hill station – Ooty, takes 1 hr 20 minutes. Please note that the train timetable is subject to change at the last moment – your Guide/Escort will inform you of changes as they are made aware of them. There is leisurely sightseeing here, and perhaps some tour members may choose to walk further and uphill to a local village. Return to Coonoor by coach.

Day 9: Coonoor/Munnar

Munnar altitude - 1524m [5000feet]

Drive approximately 9 hrs (310km) to Munnar – the first hour is a steep and winding descent from the highlands, a stretch of even road and then a steep ascent again to Munnar. The group bus will not be able to drive under the clearance height of the bridge, located just outside Munnar. Hotel staff will send jeeps to collect you and your luggage to take you the remaining short distance to the hotel, to check in.

Day 10: Munnar to Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary

After easy sightseeing at Tata Tea Museum, drive (130km / 5 hrs drive) to Thekkady and the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary.

Day 11: Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary

There is a morning boat ride today on Lake Periyar, followed by a walk to view the wildlife. There is a variety of walks on offer, generally 4 to 7km in length. If you do not wish to join the walk, please notify your national escort for alternative arrangements.

Day 12: Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary/Nedumudy

Check-out from the hotel early this morning and drive 4 hrs (170km) to the small town of Nedumudy, which is another boarding point near Kumarakom. Board houseboats for sightseeing, meals and overnight accommodation.

Day 13: Alleppey/Kochi

Continue cruising until approx 9am then disembark at Alleppey. Drive 1 ½ hrs (65km) to Kochi and commence sightseeing. Sightseeing in the Fort Cochin area involves 1 to 2 hours on foot and shopping time. Transfer (45mins drive) to hotel and check in.

Day 14: Kochi

Easy sightseeing around Kochi today.

Day 15: Kochi/Kovalam Beach

Drive 5 hrs (240km) to Kovalam Beach via Trivandrum and check in at hotel. Free time in afternoon.

Day 16: Trivandrum day trip

Easy sightseeing today around Trivandrum with 4 to 5 hrs on foot. Return to Kovalam overnight.

Day 17: Depart Trivandrum (Kovalam)

Late check out has been requested for your group today (until 6pm). In this case, you will have free time during the day, then you can return to the hotel to pack and freshen up before checking out from the hotel. Transfer (40mins drive) to the airport according to the time of your international flight.

Day 18: New Zealand

Arrive home.

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