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TRAVEL

EARLY BIRD
BOOKING BONUS

BOOK BY 15TH MARCH 2019
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OVER £100 PER PERSON

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Treasures of Southern India

26th November 2020
15 Days from £3395pp*

Join Wendy in the tranquil landscapes and beautiful sights of Southern India, a serene land of sleepy villages, verdant hillsides, leafy tea plantations, delicious cuisine and fine beaches.



For more information about this departure please contact:

Regent Travel - 01785 818202

www.regent-travel.co.uk 63 High Street, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 8AD



Lead price advertised based on a standard twin/double room. Regent (ABTA 89283) act as agent for Cox & Kings (ATOL 2815, ABTA V2999), and all bookings are subject to their booking conditions, which can be found in their brochure (copies available in Regent store) or on their website, www.coxandkings.co.uk. Itinerary & prices advertised are correct at time of going to print but tour itineraries are prepared in advance of travel dates therefore Regent reserve the right to make any changes necessary (E&OE). Itinerary advertised is subject to change or cancellation dependent on weather conditions, political climate and suchlike. Flight bookings are not issued until approx. 11 months prior to departure and prices, dates & timings are subject to fluctuation and change until this time. Regent will confirm all flight timings and available upgrades prior to departure date. Regent Travel are GDPR compliant. Regent Travel do not accept balance payments via Credit Card (only for deposits up to the value of £500). Booking offers subject to Regent discretion. Leaflet issue 1 - 20 November 2018 - LM.

Regent Highlights

- Fully escorted by Wendy Birch (subject to minimum numbers)
- Return Economy flights from Birmingham with Emirates
- 13 nights' accommodation in a variety of hotels including a number of boutique and heritage properties
- Selected meals included as per itinerary (B = Breakfast, D = Dinner)
- Experience the incredible sights of Bangalore, Mysore, Ooty, Conoor, Madurai, Thekkady, Cochin, Kumarakom Lake & more
- See Mysore Palace illuminated with over a hundred thousand lightbulbs
- Ride the scenic Blue Mountain Railway
- EARLY BOOKING OFFER - Book by 15th March 2019 to receive FREE return transport to Birmingham Airport (from local departure points), a FREE Lounge Pass at Dubai Airport (outward journey only) and FREE traditional Afternoon Tea in Cochin

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Lalbagh, Bangalore



Mysore Palace



Meenakshi-Sundareshwarar

Your Itinerary

Thursday 26th November 2020

Our adventure begins this morning, as we fly with Emirates from Birmingham to Bangalore via Dubai. Bangalore is known as the 'Garden City' because of its numerous verdant parks and avenues of jacaranda, gulmohur and cassia. The present location of Bangalore was chosen by a local chieftain, Kempegowda, in 1537, on land gifted to him by the ruler of Vijayanagar, and holds a rich history.

Friday 27th November 2020

Arriving in Bangalore we transfer to 5* **Lalit Ashok Bangalore** for an overnight stay. This afternoon enjoy a tour of the 'Garden City', beginning with a visit to Lalbagh, a botanical garden spread over 240 acres which is home to a wide variety of exotic trees and plants. We will drive past Vidhan Sabha, which houses the State Legislative assembly and part of the secretariat and Tipu Sultan's Palace. Constructed between 1781 and 1791, it was once the summer residence of Tipu Sultan. Finally we visit the Bull Temple, believed to have been constructed in the 16th century and carved out of a single block of granite - a magnificent sight.

Saturday 28th November 2020

Today we depart Bangalore for Mysore, a journey of 140km and approximately 3.5 hours. The palaces and royal gardens of Mysore, known as 'the Jewel of Karnataka', provide glimpses of its past grandeur, and the area has unique arts, culture and festivals, making it a fascinating region to explore. The rulers of Mysore State, the Wodeyar Rajas, were connoisseurs of art and architecture and enjoyed a lavish lifestyle. Thus the Maharaja's Palace is one of the largest in the country, embellished with stained glass, domes and turrets giving it an ethereal air. The elegant city of Mysore is also ideal for shopping, with its famous Mysore silks printed or woven in brilliant colours and beautiful textures. Immerse yourself in the soft perfume of sandalwood, Mysore's signature scent, which is used throughout the city in temple incense, oil and soap. Enjoy a walking tour of Mysore's colourful markets including the Devaraja Market, this afternoon. Dinner tonight will be enjoyed at a local restaurant. Overnight at 5* **Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel**. (B,D)

Sunday 29th November 2020

This morning we explore Mysore. Our tour takes us to Chamundi Hill, just outside the city, which is topped by a temple to Chamundi, the Rajas' chosen deity. The figure of the goddess is made of solid gold. Half-way up the hill sits a huge granite statue of Nandi the bull, Lord Shiva's vehicle, and the route is dotted with other minor shrines. Our tour includes Mysore's market area, where there will be the opportunity to buy local crafts such as sandalwood carvings and woven silk. Visit the Maharajah's Palace this evening to witness it spectacularly illuminated by over a hundred thousand lightbulbs, a wonderful sight. The palace dominates the centre of Mysore with its beautiful Hindu and Saracenic architecture, and the interior of the palace is lavishly decorated with stained glass, mirrors, pillars, paintings and jewels. Overnight once more at the **Radisson Blue Plaza Hotel**. (B)

Monday 30th November 2020

Depart Mysore we head for Ooty, a journey of 120km and approximately 3 hours. The hill station of Ooty, sometimes referred to as Ootacamund or its modern name of Udhagamandalam, was founded by the British in the early part of the 19th century to serve as the summer headquarters of the Chennai (Madras) government. Ooty still contains many reminders of this period, shown in its stone churches, private schools and botanical gardens. Not to be missed during any stay here is the quaint Blue Mountain Railway or 'Toy Train', affording spectacular views of the eastern slopes of the rainforest-covered Nilgiri Hills. This afternoon we take a tour of Ooty, beginning with the Botanical Gardens. Established in 1848, see over a thousand varieties of plants, shrubs and trees including orchids, ferns, alpines and medicinal plants. The Gardens are made up of beautiful lawns, glasshouses and a 20-million-year-old fossilised tree trunk by the small lake. Ooty Lake was built in 1825, and to the north lies St Stephen's Church. Built in the 1820s in a Gothic Style, it occupies the site of a Toda temple, a type of temple constructed in a circular pit lined with stones. Much of the wood is said to be from Tipu Sultan's Lalbagh Palace in Srirangapatnam. Late afternoon we arrive at the 5* **Savoy Hotel**, our base for the next two nights. (B)

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Toy Train, Ooty



Western Ghats



Stucco decoration



Keralan backwaters

Tuesday 1st December 2020

After breakfast we drive from Ooty to Coonoor, a journey time of approximately 35 minutes. Named after Coon tribe, Coonoor is a tea town and the second largest hill station in the Nilgiris. It stands on a lower ridge of the main plateau at an altitude of 1839 metres. The weather at Coonoor remains pleasantly cool throughout the summer and can be crisp during winter months. Return to Ooty via the scenic narrow-gauge 'toy train'. India is lucky to have the services of the wonderful toy trains, which get their name from small-sized engines running on slim tracks, when India's first mountain railway was playfully referred to as a 'toy train' by Darjeeling residents. The name stuck, and India's network of narrow-gauge trains are all now affectionately known by the moniker. Running at a maximum speed of 33km per hour, Ooty's Toy Train treks across the plains and plantations of the verdant Nilgiri Hills, with tunnels and tall girder bridges along the way, giving breath-taking views. Overnight again at the **Savoy Hotel**. (B)

Wednesday 2nd December 2020

Our drive today from Ooty to Madurai covers a distance of 275km and a journey time of around 6.5 hours. Madurai, formerly the seat of power for the Pandya dynasty, is one of the oldest cities in the south. It lies along the bank of the Vaigai River and, as with many Hindu cities, the frenetic centre of the city's activity is the main temple - the mighty Meenakshi-Sundareshwarar. The temple is an important Hindu pilgrimage site and is covered in a profusion of brightly coloured stucco figures. Beneath, the dimly lit pillared halls are filled with pilgrims, priests and exotic fragrances. One Hindu legend tells that a few drops of nectar fell from Shiva's hair onto the city, and this changed the name to Madurai, or 'city of nectar'. Madurai's other points of interest include the Gandhi Museum, which is dedicated to the life of the great Mahatma Gandhi and includes exhibits such as the dhoti he was wearing when he was assassinated. Arrive at the 5* **Heritage Madurai Hotel**, our home for the next two nights. (B,D)

Thursday 3rd December 2020

This morning we enjoy sightseeing in Madurai, which has been a flourishing market town since the 2nd century BC and a centre of power for many dynasties. In a city with such a turbulent past, it is little wonder that its streets and monuments hold such a wealth of stories. Walk through this ancient city and listen to tales that span the gamut of time - some set millennia ago and some more recent; stories that zigzag obscure lines which separate history and myth; stories of the people who put Madurai on the map, and of those who un-made it too; stories of fickle kings and towering monuments; whimsical Gods and extraordinary mortals. Each of these tales will give you a glimpse into the city's heart. This evening we visit Meenakshi Temple, located in the heart of Madurai and surrounded by colourful markets. The temple is a brilliant example of southern temple architecture, with its nine 'gopurams' (temple towers) soaring to almost fifty metres above the gateways and decorated with colourful stucco images of gods, goddesses and animals. Our visit includes the thousand-pillared hall and the Golden Lotus Tank. Overnight once more at the **Heritage Madurai Hotel**. (B)

Friday 4th December 2020

Today we drive from Madurai to Thekkady, a journey of 160km and approximately 4 hours. Thekkady is set amongst endless green slopes in the Cardamom Hills, in the spice-growing region of the Western Ghats. Dense jungle and the vast plantations of teak, rubber, cardamom, tea and coffee offer perfect respite from the heat of the coastal plains. Thekkady is also home to the Periyar wildlife reserve, famous for elephants. There is a variety of other wildlife including barking deer, wild boar, Indian bison and the Giant Malabar squirrel. Although the reserve is a designated tiger reserve, there are less than 40 tigers here. They are also shy and hard to find, so tiger sightings are very rare. Hear onwards to 4* **Spice Village Hotel**, where we will spend the next two nights. (B,D)

Saturday 5th December 2020

Early this morning, enjoy a nature walk with our local guide. Pass through moist deciduous forests and marshy grasslands, discovering tropical plant life, bird and butterfly varieties and perhaps even barking deer, sambar and langurs. It is advisable to wear long trousers, long-sleeved shirts and trekking shoes. This walk is not advised for those less mobile. Overnight at **Spice Village Hotel**. (B)

Sunday 6th December 2020

After breakfast we drive from Thekkady to Kochi (Cochin), a journey of 192km and approximately 4.5 hours. Kochi is spread across islands and promontories in a stunning location between the Arabian Sea and the Keralan backwaters. The city was formed in 1341 when a flood created a natural safe port, which became the principal harbour for the Malabar Coast's spice trade. The rulers of Kochi invited people of various religions to settle here, attracting Jews and Christians who built places of worship and created their own communities. Today there remains Portuguese, Dutch and British settlers and influences, and Chinese influence in the form of the famous fishing nets - huge contraptions that are still used to lift fish from the bay. The city's greatest concentration of historic sights is in the Fort Kochi area, where the ancient streets are home to the Mattancherry Palace, old spice warehouses, a Jewish synagogue and numerous churches. Arrive at our 3.5* hotel the **Eighth Bastion**, our home for the next two nights. This evening enjoy dinner at a local restaurant followed by a short boat ride around Kochi harbour an excellent opportunity to get an overall impression of this beautifully located city, revealing Arab dhows, Chinese fishing nets, bazaars, old storage warehouses and traditional mansions. (B,D)



Periyar Wildlife Reserve



Giant Malabar Squirrel



Butterfly in Thekkady



Chinese fishing nets in Kochi

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Kathakali dancer



Chinese fishing nets in Kochi



Kumarakom, Vembanad Lake



Oriole in Kumarakom

Itinerary Continued...

Monday 7th December 2020

Enjoy a full day tour of Kochi today as we visit the Jew Town, St. Francis Church and see the Chinese fishing nets. The synagogue in Jew Town was built in 1568 and rebuilt in 1664, and its interior is a mixture of styles with hand-painted blue and white floor tiles from Canton, 19th century Belgian oil-burning chandeliers and an elaborately carved ark housing four scrolls from the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. Visitors to the synagogue should be modestly dressed and admission is denied to those wearing short trousers, short skirts or sleeveless tops. Bare shoulders and midriffs are not permitted. The church of St Francis, dating back to 1503, was the first European church in India, built by Portuguese Admiral Albuquerque. The Church was Protestant Dutch, then Anglican and is now a Church of South India. Chinese fishing nets line the northern shore of Fort Kochi, a graceful sight suspended from arched poles, and are thought to have been introduced to the region by the court of Kublai Khan. This evening enjoy a performance of Kathakali dancing, demonstrating an ancient ritual that plays an important role in Kerala culture. The plays are based on the three major Hindu epics, acted out with elaborate hand gestures, facial expressions and choreographed movements. Overnight at **Eighth Bastion** hotel. (B)

Tuesday 8th December 2020

Depart Kochi for Kumarakom, a journey of 65km and approximately 2 hours. An island on Vembanad Lake, Kumarakom is a sleepy agricultural and fishing town accessed by serene navigable waterways, known as the Kerala backwater. On the water, locals punt narrow dug-out boats carrying loads of coir, copra and cashews, whilst on wider waterways larger rice boats ply their trade. The area holds extraordinary natural beauty, with luscious tropical vegetation, coconut palms and colourful birdlife, including kingfishers, fish eagles, storks and egrets. Arrive at the 5* **Kumarakom Lake Resort**, our hotel for the next two nights. (B)

Wednesday 9th December 2020

Enjoy a full day at leisure to take advantage of the facilities our hotel has to offer. Overnight at **Kumarakom Lake Resort**. (B)

Thursday 10th December 2020

We have an early departure this morning, transferring back to Kochi. This journey is around 130km, lasting approximately 2 hours. Fly home via Dubai, arriving into Birmingham early evening with beautiful memories of our outstanding tour. (B)

£3395 per person - Twin/Double Room £1575 Single Room Supplement
A deposit of £300pp is required to reserve your place on this tour*

Accommodation (ask in store for further details)

5* Lalit Ashok Bangalore



5* Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, Mysore 5* Savoy Hotel, Ooty



5* Heritage Madurai



4* Spice Village, Thekkady



3* Eighth Bastion, Cochin



5* Kumarakom Lake Resort



IMPORTANT INFORMATION : This holiday is not suitable for people with mobility issues due to the busy nature of the itinerary advertised. Various methods of transport will be used. Terrain is not guaranteed to be flat or even, especially at ancient sites. All special requests including room, health & dietary requests must be made at time of booking. Regent must be informed if health alters over the booking period. We recommend that you see your local GP or health advisor prior to travel for advice on current vaccinations and health precautions. A visa will be required for entrance to India, at additional expense. Details of this will also be given to your Pre-Tour meeting. **Further tour details of all above information will be given at a Pre-Tour Meeting approximately 3 months prior to departure date. Please ask in store for details. *PLEASE NOTE: A non-refundable part payment is due on 26th October 2019. This is an amount of £400 per person for twin/double rooms and £700 per person for single or sole use rooms.**

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