

# BACKWATERS OF KERALA

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## 09 nights / 10 days

### DAY 01 ARRIVE MUMBAI

Room is reserved today for you from 1200 hrs today for immediate occupancy. Arrive late in the evening or in early hours of Day 02.

### DAY 02 IN MUMBAI

After relaxing and overcoming the jet lag, start your late morning sightseeing tour of Mumbai. The Gateway of India is the main attraction of Mumbai city. The Mani Bhawan or the Gandhi memorial was once used to be the residence of Mahatma Gandhi in Mumbai. Also known as Queen's Necklace, Marine Drive. Juhu is a 5-km-long beach that attracts a large number of visitors on any day of the week. Also visit gardens like the Hanging Garden and the Kamla Nehru Garden and Chowpatty gives you the view of one of the most happening beaches of Mumbai. Return to your hotel for overnight stay.

### DAY 03 TO COCHIN

Fly to Cochin today morning. Kochi has one of the finest harbors on the Arabian Sea coast and has been a port of call for foreign traders for centuries. Its cosmopolitan character is reflected in the buildings and structures representing various regions of the world. As we explore the streets and backwaters, we will see Chinese, Jewish, Portuguese, Dutch and English architectural styles as a result of the settlement of different nationalities in the city. The city was founded in 1341 following a flood that created a natural and safe harbor and quickly became the chief port on the Malabar Coast. From the 1400's it attracted Jewish, Arab and Christian settlers from the Middle East as a result of the Royal Family's move to the city from Muziris, 50kms north. The Europeans began settling from 1500's as the Portuguese, Dutch and English competed to control the port and the lucrative spice trade.

In the evening you will be taken for one hour show of KATHAKALI- the ancient dance form of KERALA.

### DAY 04 IN COCHIN

Enjoy a guided tour in the first half of the day.

The city has three distinctive regions - Ernakulam, the modern region to the East, and the older districts of Mattancherry and Fort Cochin located on a peninsula in the west. The easiest way to get around is by ferry, or by walking through the narrow roads and over bridges.

Following our arrival in Cochin, we will spend today walking through the old sections. Our walking tour will take us to; Jew Town, including the Pardesi Synagogue; the Mattancherry Palace, known locally as the Dutch Palace; Fort Cochin, reminiscent of European streets and houses; the Chinese Fishing Nets on the northern shore of Fort Cochin; and St Francis Church, near to a typical English village green. A highlight is watching the fishermen working the nets (which operate on a weight system) as the sun is setting.

#### **DAY 05**                      **TO PERIYAR (192 KMS)**

This morning you travel approximately 4 hours by private vehicle to Thekkady, the main entrance to Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary. Upon arrival check-into your cottage. The name Thekkady, for those who have already visited this place, brings to mind images of elephants, unending chains of hills and spice-scented plantations. Moreover, the flora and fauna of the Periyar wildlife sanctuary is absolutely thrilling. The wildlife sanctuary here is the natural habitat of a wide variety of animal species. The Periyar Lake is a paradise for the nature lovers. It gives you an opportunity to observe the wild animals roaming in the jungle. The lake is also a birdwatcher's delight. The greatest attraction of Periyar Lake, however, is the herds of wild elephants that come down to play in the lake. Moreover, the Sanctuary Watch Tower situated in the forest interior gives you a panoramic view of the park.

#### **DAY 06**                      **TO KUMARAKOM (114 KMS)**

What an idyllic way to start the day, an early morning boat ride on Lake Periyar! Covering an area of 300 square miles Periyar is one of the largest and most frequently visited wildlife reserves in India. It is part of the Project Tiger campaign and animals inhabiting the area include elephant, deer, pig, tiger, leopard, bison, monkeys and malabar squirrel. Whilst actually spotting an illusive tiger or leopard could prove difficult, the mix of wooded hills and valleys make it a wonderful place to enjoy the greenery.

Return to your resort for breakfast then a local guide takes you to view spice plantations of cardamon, pepper and other local specialties. Later drive approximately 3 hours to Kumarakom. An old rubber plantation set around the Vembanad Lake has been sensitively developed by the Kerala Tourism Department into a bird sanctuary. The Vembanad Lake with its majestic canals, streams and distributories along its banks weaves an intricate and beautiful web. This area is a winter home for many migratory birds and species include the darter, little cormorant, night heron, golden-backed woodpecker, white-breasted water hen and many more wonderful birds. After lunch you visit the bird sanctuary with a local naturalist and if possible do your wildlife viewing by boat.

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#### **DAY 07**                      **TO ALLEPPEY (50 KMS)**

After breakfast you make a short trip to the ferry point where you board your houseboat. For you we have reserved a private, one room houseboat that travels until sunset when it then anchors for the night, at Alleppey. Your boat has a private balcony with comfortable chairs (perfect for that G&T while the sun goes down!). The rooms are fully furnished with attached bathrooms. The boat has a fully equipped kitchen and an experienced cook to prepare authentic Kerala cuisine with seafood specialties and fresh vegetables. This is your chance to pick up some fabulous cooking tips!

The entire state of Kerala is blessed with plenty of rivers and the resources of many are still untapped. The waterways of Kerala play a major role in the economy of the state as they link remote villages and islands with the mainland. It is an incredibly different experience to cruise in the backwaters in country boats, absorbing the beauty of Kerala's villages. Houseboats, also known as kettuvallam or rice boats, are today one of the major tourist attractions in Kerala, but these boats were used to carry rice bags in their earlier days. These houseboats are uniquely designed using local materials like bamboo poles, coconut fiber ropes, bamboo mats, carpets etc. and are a fabulous way to enjoy exploring the fascinating beauties of backwaters. With their languid grace and quaint design adding another dimension to your cruise in the shimmering blue waters. Overnight onboard the houseboat.

#### **DAY 08**                      **TO TRIVANDRUM (159 KMS)**

You will get up early today by chirping of birds and occasional ripples in the water. Your breakfast will be cooked before your eyes by your expert boat-crew. Enjoy a sumptuous breakfast while cruising quietly on the unending stretches of these backwaters. The boat will cruise through various canals and waterways giving you an insight into the rural life. Stop at any house and ask your boatman to take you to one of the houses to interact with local people and to witness their way of living. Later check out of the houseboat and switch over to your car for 4 hours drive to Trivandrum (Kovalam beach). Arrive directly at your resort for spending rest of the day at leisure. Overnight is at your beach resort.

Your Resort also has an Ayurveda Center run by a young post graduate Ayurveda doctor, a full-fledged Yoga and meditation center which also offers short-term courses, a beach activity center, a travel desk, a car rental service. Organised cultural performances by professional artists performing art forms, giving a glimpse of the richness and variety of Kerala , on request .

#### **DAY 09**                      **TRIVANDRUM / MUMBAI**

Morning is free on the beach. Later you will be taken to the airport for your onward flight. Arrive Mumbai and visit an airport hotel to spend your last night in India. Rest for a while before you are taken to the airport for your onward connection.

#### **DAY 10**                      **DEPARTURE**