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Activity

Cultural and History Tour of India | Small Group Tour

Nov 07 2024 to Nov 29 2024



Cultural and History Tour of India

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours across India and beyond into the Indian Sub continent. We explore India's natural beauty, its ancient, and Imperial heritage, its World Heritage Sites, and world famous cities, all with some truly spectacular scenery along the way of people, culture and landscapes. This and more is all waiting to be explored on one of Odyssey's small group tours of India, designed for the senior traveller, and led by experienced, and enthusiastic like minded people.

Explore the enchanting tapestry of India with Odyssey's small group tour designed for mature and senior couples and solo travelers. Bounded by the majestic Himalayan ranges in the north and adorned with endless stretches of golden beaches, India unveils a vivid kaleidoscope of landscapes, historic treasures like the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort, royal cities such as Delhi, Jaipur, Agra, and Madras, a spectrum of colorful people, and a rich cultural heritage.

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Our escorted tour in India unfolds the country's natural beauty, vibrant spice markets, and tantalizing cuisine. Witness UNESCO World Heritage Sites like the breathtaking Elephant Cave Temples off Mumbai's eastern shore, glide through the backwaters of Kerala, and explore a spectrum of destinations, from Northern India to Southern India. Immerse yourself in this unique travel experience, unraveling the layers of India's past and savoring its diverse and captivating present.





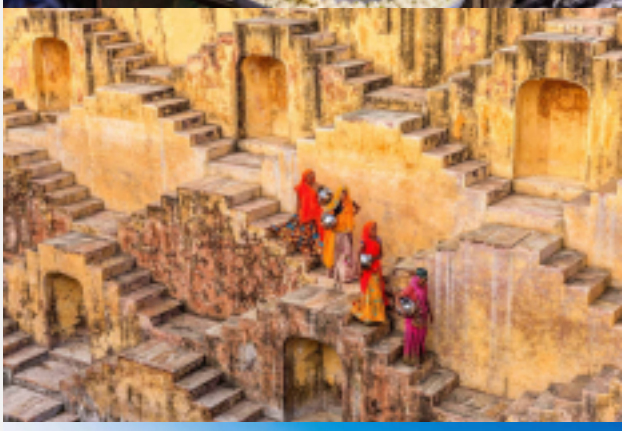


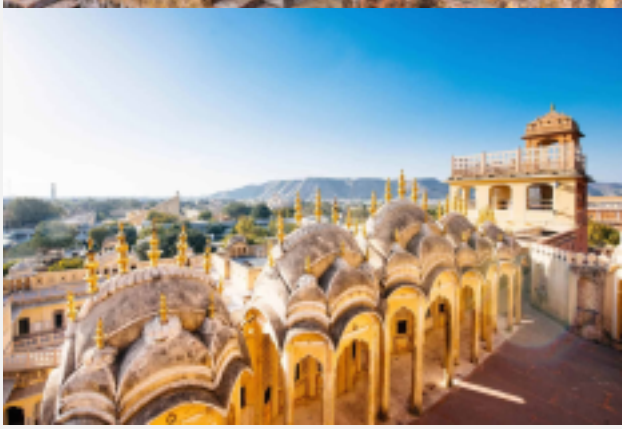
India Tour Itinerary

India is by no measure a monolithic culture or state, but a diverse collection of historic cities and nations each with their own distinct histories, language and culture. We offer a safe way to travel and explore this amazing country. explores these histories and distinctions, with each destination telling part of the rich and complex story that makes up contemporary India. Our small group tour visits the India's

golden triangle (Agra, Delhi and Jaipur) and much more.







Jaipur

Jaipur the legendary ‘Pink City’, epitomizes the beauty and grandeur of historic India. The city takes its name from its founder, Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh, one of 18th century India’s most enlightened monarchs. Fascinated with astronomy, mathematics and science, Jai Singh worked with the Bengali architect and scholar Vidyadhar Bhattacharya to create Northern India’s first planned city, following a grid system. The city was later repainted completely in pale pink (traditionally the colour of hospitality) by Maharaja Ram Singh to welcome the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) in 1876. Today, all residents of the Old City are required by law to keep their buildings painted in pale salmon pink, upholding the historic image of the city.

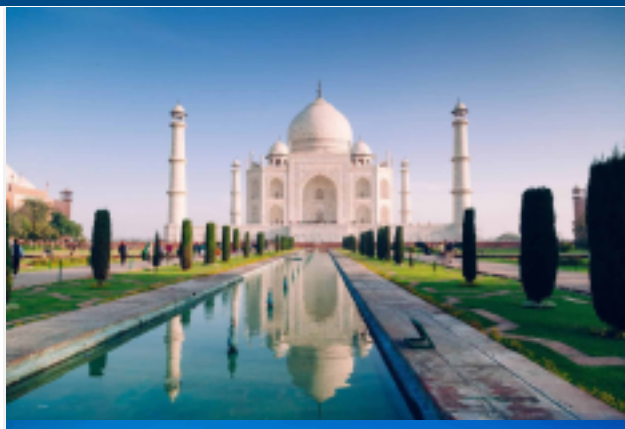
Agra

Agra in India’s central region, is the most city famous for the nation’s most recognizable landmark, the Taj Mahal. The city was founded in 1501 by Sultan Sikander Lodi, as the capital of the Delhi sultanate. Just over 20 years later, Emperor Babur defeated the last Lodi Sultan at Panipat, 90 km to the north, and the Mughal dynasty was founded, expanding over swathes of northern India. Agra was the capital of the Mughal Empire during the reigns of Jahangir, Akbar, and Shah Mahan. It was during this period that the city reached its peak of magnificence, with the grand structures of the Taj Mahal and the other mausoleums built along the banks of the Yamuna River.

Varanasi

Varanasi also known as the ‘city of lights’, is one of the world’s oldest inhabited cities. Colourful, intense and mystical, it is the spiritual capital of India and the country’s holiest Hindu city, located on the banks of the river Ganges in Uttar Pradesh. Varanasi is a city of pilgrimage for many Hindu and Jain people. Known as the city of Shiva, one of the principal deities of Hinduism, it is auspicious to die in Varanasi, as those who die here will be liberated from the cycle of reincarnation. For travellers, visiting Varanasi is a cultural experience like no other and the most

interesting part of being in the city is just observing what takes place around and the many rituals going on throughout the day.







Cochin (Kochi)

Cochin located near India's southern tip, has long been among India's most cosmopolitan cities. A center of trade and cultural exchange, Kochi has been shaped by a number of cultures: Indian, Chinese, Jewish, Portuguese, Dutch and British. Kochi spent parts of its history under various colonial rulers, beginning with the Portuguese in 1500 until 1663, when it passed to Dutch rule. Under the Dutch Kochi enjoyed its greatest prosperity, with wealth shared between the city's Hindu majority and Muslim, Jewish, and Christian minorities. Kochi was then ruled by the British from 1795 to 1947, at which point it joined independent India.

Mumbai

Mumbai (formerly Bombay) is one of the world's great metropolises, it embodies India at its most vibrant and contrasted, where Bollywood stars and finance billionaires live in luxury, and those left behind populate Dharavi, the world's largest slum. Mumbai is the energetic heart of modern India, with its role as the financial, commercial, and entertainment capital of the subcontinent. The city of Mumbai has an ancient history. Settlements here date back to 1000 BC, with the city being a center of maritime trade with Persia and Egypt. In 1348 the city was captured by the Muslim Sultan of Gujarat, then, in 1534 it was ceded to the Portuguese, before coming under British rule as part of the dowry of the Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza, marrying Charles II in 1661. Today, Mumbai has a population of around 19.98 million, making it the seventh most populous city in the world and the second-biggest in India. As the richest city in India, Mumbai draws migrants from around the nation, seeking opportunities in finance, commerce, or hoping to find fame in Bollywood, the world's biggest film industry.

Delhi

Delhi embodies the synthesis between historic and modern India, featuring a frantic mix of medieval architecture, broad avenues, and



modern design. Few cities have been built and rebuilt as many times as Delhi, with at least eight independent cities being established here, each leaving its ruins in the patchwork of the modern city. The earliest reference to a city in the Delhi area was made in the *Mahabharata*, with Delhi supposed to be Indraprastha, the legendary city of the Pandavas. Throughout its history Delhi has been ruled by numerous successive kingdoms, and has served the purpose of a religious, economic, and political hubs, and at one point a bastion against the invading Mongols. As the capital city, Delhi is home to important centers of religious, cultural and economic life and is a popular starting point for visitors to India.

Odyssey's India Tour Highlights

One of the highlights of our trip to India is a journey to the Amber Fort, in the heart of Jaipur in North India. In Jaipur, we also make time for one of the essential sights of India, the pink rose Maharaja's City Palace.

The Taj Mahal is another highlight of our trip , a favourite among Indian holiday destinations, but with the help of local guides and a local tour operator we also make time for unique experiences, lesser known archaeological and historical wonders off the tourist trail. One of these is Varanasi. Located on the west bank of the Ganges, this is India's holiest Hindu city. The 90 or so ghats – steep steps leading to the banks of the river – define the region's identity. While here, we take a ferry pilgrimage along the river early in the morning to watch the sun rise over the Ganges.

We also experience the spectacular Elephanta Cave Temples off Mumbai's eastern shore on a guided tour. A UNESCO World Heritage site, the cave temples are chiselled into the rocky cliff and dedicated to the god Shiva.

In south India, the city of Kochi (Cochin) is a highly cosmopolitan trading centre for spices and seafood. The capital of Kerala, this city has an extraordinary heritage born from influences of Dutch, Portuguese, French, and British colonialism. Surrounded by palm groves, green fields, inland lakes, and backwaters, Cochin and Kerala have enchanted

visitors from around the world for centuries.

Other highlights of our cultural tour include learning about the 3,000-year history of Delhi. In Delhi, we visit its most iconic monuments and places, including the Red Fort, Raj Ghat, and the colourful shopping bazaars. We also spend a night on a houseboat amidst emerald green tropical vegetation.

You can learn more about India with Odyssey's country profile, where all other escorted group tours departures are listed as well, for example the short version of this tour.

For more details about this guided tour, please click the 'Top 5' or 'Itinerary' buttons above! If you're keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.

Articles about India

The following list of articles are either published by Odyssey Traveller or are carefully selected external sources to maximise senior traveller's knowledge and enjoyment of India when visiting:

- India's Mughal Empire
- Clash of the Mughals and the Marathas
- History of British Rule in India
- Discovering India
- Top 20 World Heritage Sites You Must Visit
- 7 Wonders of India (World Atlas)
- New Seven Wonders of the World (Travel Channel)
- 7 Things You Didn't Know About the Qutub Minar (National Geographic Traveller India)

- Incredible India

Tour Notes

- Itineraries may change if flight schedules, site availability, and other inclusions have to be amended prior to departure.

Highlights

1. Learn about the 3,000-year history of Delhi and visit its icons including the Red Fort, Raj Ghat, and the colourful shopping bazaars.
2. Spend a night on a houseboat amidst emerald green tropical vegetation and exotic fauna.
3. Visit the wondrous Taj Mahal with its superb view.
4. Ride an elephant to and from the top of the hill on which the Amber Fort is situated.
5. Experience Chokhi Dhan, an ethnic village with live music, astrology, games, folk dances, and puppet shows.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Delhi

Overview:

Upon arrival in Delhi, we transfer to our hotel individually. Our tour begins with a welcome dinner and program orientation at a specialty restaurant. (D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Royal Plaza or similar.

Day 2

Locations: Delhi

Overview:

Today we begin exploring Delhi, the capital of India, a metropolis of great importance to the nation, serving as both the gateway to the country and the seat of its political power. It provides an intoxicating mix of the ancient and the modern. In its 3,000-year history, Delhi has been the site of 7 different cities. Its strategic location has long defined it as the seat of power. Delhi is a city waiting to be explored. (B,D)

Accommodation:

Royal Plaza or similar.

Day 3

Locations: Jaipur

Overview:

After breakfast, we drive to Jaipur (265 km / 5 hours drive). After checking in to our hotel, we enjoy the rest of the evening at leisure before heading out for dinner at a local restaurant.

The capital of Rajasthan was built in pink by the notable astronomer Maharaja Jai Singh. It was designed in honour of a visiting prince in the 18th century, and, ever since, has retained this colour. We visit Maharaja's City Palace, the pink rose of the residential and business areas. (B,D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Diggi Palace or similar.

Day 4

Locations: Jaipur

Overview:

After breakfast, we continue to explore the Pink City with our tour guide on an excursion to Amber Fort, situated just outside the city, where we ride on elephant to the top of the hill on which the fort is situated. The

Fort Palace of Amber was the Kachhawahas citadel until 1727, when their capital moved to Jaipur. Successive rulers continued to come here on important occasions to seek the blessings of the family deity, Shila Devi. The citadel was established in 1592 by Man Singh I on the remains of an old 11th-century fort, but the various buildings added by Jai Singh I (r. 1621-67) is what constitutes its magnificent centrepiece.

We have an afternoon sightseeing tour of the City Palace in the heart of Jaipur, known for its blend of Rajasthani and Mughal architecture. Not far away is the Central Museum. Occupying the Heart of Jai Singh II's city, the City Palace has been home to the rulers of Jaipur since the first half of the 18th century. The sprawling complex is a superb blend of Rajput and Mughal architecture, with open, airy Mughal-style public buildings leading to private apartments. Today, part of the complex is open to the public as the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, popularly known as the City Palace Museum. Its treasures, which include miniature paintings, manuscripts, Mughal carpets, musical instruments, royal costumes, and weaponry, provide a splendid introduction to Jaipur's princely past, and its fascinating arts and crafts.

Our next stop is Hawa Mahal. A whimsical addition to Rajasthan's rich architectural vocabulary, the fanciful Hawa Mahal or "Palace of Winds" was erected in 1799 by the aesthete Sawai Pratap Singh (r.1778-1803). Its ornate pink facade has become an icon for the city. The tiered, Baroque-like composition of projecting windows and balconies with perforated screens is 5 stories high but just 1 room deep, its walls not more than 20 centimetres (8 inches) thick, built of lime and mortar. The structure was designed in this way to enable the veiled ladies of the harem to observe unnoticed the lively street scenes below. Dedicated to Lord Krishna, the Hawa Mahal, seen from afar, looks like the mukut (crown) that often adorns the god's head. Visitors can climb up the winding ramp to the top, and a gateway towards the west leads into the complex. Within are administrative offices and the Archaeological Musuem, which houses a small collection of sculptures and local handicrafts, including some utensils dating back to the 2nd century BC.

We continue to Jantar Mantar. Of the five observatories built by Sawai Jai Singh II, the one in Jaipur is the largest and best preserved: the others are in Delhi, Ujjain, Mathura, and Varanasi. A keen astronomer himself, Jai Singh kept abreast of the latest astronomical studies in the world, and was most inspired by the work of Mirza Ulugh Beg, the

astronomer-king of Samarkand. Built between 1728 and 1734, the observatory has been described as “the most realistic and logical landscape in stone.” Its 16 instruments resemble a giant sculptural composition. Some of the instruments are still used to forecast how hot the summer months will be, along with the expected date of arrival, duration, and intensity of the monsoon, and the possibility of floods and famine. (B,D)

Accommodation:

Diggi Palace or similar.

Day 5

Locations: Agra

Overview:

After breakfast we depart for Agra (233 km / 5 hours drive). En route we stop for lunch at Bharatpur and, time permitting, we will stop at Keoladeo Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary before continuing to visit Fatehpur Sikri. An old deserted town from the Mughal Dynasty, Fatehpur Sikri, built in red sandstone in honour of Saint Salim Chisti. Chisti foretold the birth of 3 sons to Emperor Akbar. The town is an example of robust stability combined with much originality. Each important edifice here represents a style in itself. Notable among them is the Diwan-e-Khas, entirely unique in its concept, having a tall vaulted room with an intricately-carved central pillar supporting a platform that once held the emperor’s throne. The airy Panch Mahal, a 5-storied structure rising in pyramidal fashion, was probably used by the ladies of the court. Set like a jewel in a courtyard of pink sandstone, it is the finest building here, with the marble Tomb of Salim Chisti enclosed by finely carved, lacy marble screens. The Buland Darwaza, an imposing gateway 54 metres high, was built to commemorate Akbar’s Aligarh. The tomb is a combination of Muslim and Hindu architectural styles. We arrive in Agra in time for dinner and check in at our hotel.

Agra is famous as being home to one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Taj Mahal. The city is also famous for its craftsmen and their superb inlay work on marble and soapstone, carpets, gold thread embroidery, and leather shoes. Also of interest are the Agra Fort, Sikandra, Ram Bagh, and Itmad-Ud-Daulah. Thirty five kilometres away

are the imperial ruins of the Mughal city, Fatehpur Sikri. Agra is an old city and it is said that its name was derived from Agrabanad, a forest that finds mention in the epic Mahabharata. (B,D)

Accommodation:

1 night at The Wyndham Agra or similar.

Day 6

Locations: Agra - Varanasi

Overview:

Today we visit the wondrous Taj Mahal, where we take in the superb structure and views. Taj Mahal, the architectural modern day wonder of the world, is a fine example of the fusion of many architectural styles. We continue with a visit to Agra Fort, designed and built by Akbar in 1565 A.D. It is constructed with barricaded walls of red sandstone and it houses the beautiful Pearl Mosque and numerous palaces including the Jahangir Mahal, Diwan-i-Khas, Diwan-i-Am, Macchhi Bhawan, Nagina Masjid, Meena Bazar, Moti Masjid, Sheesh Mahal, and Musamman Burj, from where Taj Mahal is visible in all its beauty. Later in the evening we will have an early dinner followed by a transfer to the train station where we will board our overnight train to Varanasi.

The Taj Mahal was built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in 1631. Its perfect proportions and exquisite craftsmanship have been described as “a vision, a dream, a poem, a wonder.” This sublime garden-tomb, an image of the Islamic garden of paradise, cost nearly 41 million rupees and 500 kilos (1,102 lbs) of gold. About 20,000 workers laboured for 12 years to complete it in 1643.

Situated on the West Bank of the Yamuna, Agra Fort was built by Emperor Akbar between 1565 and 1573. Its imposing red sandstone ramparts form a crescent along the riverfront, and encompass an enormous complex of courtly buildings, ranging in style from the early eclecticism of Akbar to the sublime elegance of Shah Jahan. The barracks to the north are 19th-century British additions. A deep moat,

once filled with water from the Yamuna, surrounds the fort.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

Overnight train.

Day 7

Locations: Varanasi

Overview:

Upon arrival at the Varanasi train station, we are transferred to our hotel to freshen up. After lunch, we have a half-day sightseeing tour of the city including visiting the Ghats and attending the evening Aarti ritual at the Ghats for the river Ganges.

Also known as Kashi (“the City of Light”), or as Benares, Varanasi is situated on the west bank of the Ganges and is India’s holiest Hindu City, with a spiritual and religious legacy that goes back nearly 3,000 years. This is the city of Shiva, the foremost among the 12 places where the god burrowed and then burst into the sky in a fiery pillar of light (Jyotirlinga). Sanctified by Shiva’s all-pervading presence and the sacred Ganges, the 90 or so ghats along the river define the life and identify of Varanasi. Stretching from the southern Asi Ghat to the northern Adi Keshava Ghat, close to the Malviya Bridge, the Ghat covers more than 6 kilometres. Lined with temples and shrines, the ghats reverberate with the endless cycle of Hindu religious practice, from daily rituals to profound rites of passage. (B,L,D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Hotel Hindusthan or similar.

Day 8

Locations: Varanasi

Overview:

Today, we take an early morning boat ride on the Ganges, a ferry pilgrimage from Ghat to Ghat. People bathe early in the morning to offer prayers to the rising sun. The two cremation ghats are Manikarniks and

Harishchandra, where funeral pyres burn day and night. Hindus believe that to die in Kashi and to be cremated on banks of the Ganges is to attain release from the cycle of birth and death.

After our boat ride, we return to the hotel for breakfast, and then depart for our tour of Sarnath, the buried Buddhist city where Lord Buddha gave his first sermon. Sarnath was a renewed school of learning from 6th century BC to 12th century AD. Later on, we visit the ruins, the stupa, the Buddhist temple, and the museum. (B,D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Hindusthan or similar.

Day 9

Locations: Mumbai

Overview:

Today we fly to Mumbai and enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure.

The capital of Maharashtra is India's most dynamic, cosmopolitan, and crowded city. The country's financial centre and its busiest port, Mumbai is also home to the world's biggest cinema industry, popularly known as Bollywood. Some 16 million people, from billionaire tycoons to homeless pavement dwellers, live in this teeming megalopolis. (B,D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Fariyas Hotel or similar.

Day 10

Locations: Mumbai

Overview:

In the morning, we enjoy an Elephanta Excursion. The rest of the day is spent doing sightseeing in Mumbai, where we have the chance to visit the Prince of Wales Museum and The Gateway to India, among other culturally significant sites.

The Elephanta cave temples are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Located on an island off Mumbai's eastern shore, the 6th-century AD Elephanta cave temples, chiselled into a rocky cliff and dedicated to

Shiva, contain some great masterpieces of Indian sculpture. Originally called Ghaarapuri or “Fort-City,” the island was renamed Elephanta by the Portuguese after a huge stone elephant that once stood here. (B,D)

Accommodation:

Fariyas Hotel or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Mysore

Overview:

After breakfast, we take a flight to Bangalore, and on arrival transfer by road to Mysore (145 km / approx. 3.5 hours drive). On arrival, we check in at our hotel. (B,D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Lalitha Mahal Hotel or similar.

Day 12

Locations: Mysore

Overview:

Today we enjoy a full day sightseeing. We will visit the Mysore Palace of the Maharaja. Built in 1911-12, the palace is a harmonious synthesis of the Hindu and Saracenic styles of architecture with archways, domes, turrets, colonnades, and sculptures that are magnificent. We visit the art gallery, drive up to Chamundi Hill to see Chamundeshwari Temple, and a panoramic view of Mysore. On the way back, we see the Nandi Bull.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

Lalitha Mahal Hotel or similar.

Day 13

Locations: Wayanad

Overview:

After breakfast we drive to Wayanad (136 km / 4.5 hours drive). Upon arrival we transfer to the hotel.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Vythiri Resort or similar.

Day 14

Locations: Wayanad

Overview:

We visit Pookat Lake and nearby Nilgiri wildlife reserve. Rich in biodiversity, the sanctuary is an integral part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, which has been established with the specific objective of conserving the biological heritage of the region. The sanctuary is rich in flora and fauna. The management lays emphasis on scientific conservation with due consideration for the general lifestyle of the tribal members and others who live in and around the forest. Elephant, spotted deer, bison, tiger, cheetah, and wild bear can all be seen here.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

Vythiri Resort or similar.

Day 15

Locations: Thrissur

Overview:

After breakfast we drive to Thrissur (195 km / approx. 6 hours drive). Upon arrival we transfer to the hotel.

(B,D)

Day 16

Locations: Alleppy

Overview:

After breakfast, we depart to Alleppey (140 km / approx. 6 hours drive). Upon arrival we board a houseboat where lunch will be served. Later we will stop at Champakulum village to see the snake boat and the market here. Dinner will also be on board while enjoying the natural scenery.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

Houseboat.

Day 17

Locations: Kumarakom

Overview:

In the morning we disembark and drive to Kumarakom for an overnight stay at an Auyrveda resort where we will learn more about this traditional Indian medicine. We visit the Punnathur Kotta elephant park, regarded as one of the largest elephant parks in the world, and Guruvayoor Temple, if time permits.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

1 night at Backwater Ripples Retreat or similar.

Day 18

Locations: Periyar

Overview:

In the morning, we drive to Periyar (138 km / approx. 3 hours drive). On arrival in Periyar we check in to our hotel and take some time to explore the nearby area. We will visit Thekkady town as well as a spice plantation where we will be accompanied by a local expert guide on spices. The area is also known for its tea plantation

(s).

(B,D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Spice Village or similar.

Day 19

Locations: Periyar

Overview:

We enjoy a morning boat ride on Periyar Lake and later take a nature walk led by a naturalist. The construction of the Mullaperiyar Dam across the Periyar river at Thekkady in 1895 submerged large tracts of land and created a huge lake, covering an area of 26 square kilometres (10 sq miles). Years later, in 1935, the then Maharaja of Travancore declared 600 square kilometres (232 sq miles) of forest surrounding the lake a wildlife sanctuary – – Periyar National Park. The Periyar Lake now forms the nucleus of the ecosystem of the sanctuary, which, over the years, has been expanded to 777 square kilometres (300 sq miles). Declared a Tiger Reserve in 1978, the sanctuary is a rare example of human interference having enhanced rather than damaged an ecosystem.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

Spice Village or similar.

Day 20

Locations: Cochin

Overview:

After breakfast we drive to Cochin (154 km / approx. 4 hours drive). Upon arrival we check in at our hotel and explore the nearby area on foot.

Kochi, better known as Cochin, is Kerala's most cosmopolitan city. It is also its main trading centre for spices and seafood. Built around a saltwater lagoon of the Arabian Sea, Kochi is in fact a collection of

narrow islands and peninsulas. While mainland Ernakulam boasts of concrete shopping malls and glitzy apartment buildings, Mattancherry and Fort Koch have an old world charm, with their blend of Dutch, Portuguese, and English bungalows and quaint narrow streets. The scenic location of Kochi's natural harbour, surrounded by palm groves, green fields, inland lakes, and backwaters, has enchanted visitors from across the globe for centuries. Cochin is a natural harbour created by the famed underwater Malabar mud-banks whose quality ensures that the rougher seas are outside and the calmer waters are within the harbour. Vasco-de-Gama placed this city on the world map. It has a Jewish synagogue, Portuguese churches, mosques and Hindu temples.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

The Killians or similar.

Day 21

Locations: Cochin

Overview:

Today we have a full day sightseeing in Cochin visiting the Dutch Palace, built by the Portuguese and known for its murals, depicting scenes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, as well as the dresses and palanquins used by Cochin's erstwhile rulers. We will see Koonan Kurishu Shrine, which is a small chapel. We will also see the Jewish Synagogue, which has a number of copper plates inscribed in the Hebrew script, as well as Fort Kochi, St. Francis Church, the oldest to be constructed by Europeans in India, Santa Cruz Basilica with a beautifully painted ceiling, and Chinese Fishing Nets near the harbor's entrance of Cochin.

In the evening we enjoy a performance of the traditional dance of the Kerala region, called Kathakali, which is a highly stylized classical Indian dance-drama, with elaborate make-up and costumes, detailed gestures, and well-defined body movements and complementary percussion.

The Mattancherry Palace, constructed by the Portuguese in the mid-1550s, was given to the ruler of Cochin as a token of goodwill in exchange for trading rights. It was later renovated by the Dutch, and so gained the misnomer: Dutch Palace. The 2-storied structure, built

around a courtyard with a small shrine to the goddess Bhagavati, is today a museum with a rare collection of murals and royal artefacts. In the central Durbar Hall, where coronation ceremonies were once held, is the portrait gallery of the Kochi rulers; it also displays palanquins and textiles. The adjacent bedrooms and chambers are renowned for their fine 17th-century murals, representative of Kerala's temple art, painted in rich, warm shades of red, yellow, black, and white. They depict religious and mythological themes as well as episodes from the Ramayana.

St. Francis Church was established in the early 1500's by the Portuguese (who called it Santo Antonio). It is one of India's earliest European churches, with a simple façade that became the model for later churches. Taken over by the Dutch and then the British, it is today affiliated with the church of South India. Within are numerous gravestones with inscriptions, the earliest a Portuguese epitaph dated 1562. Vasco da Gama was buried here in 1524 until his body was taken to Portugal 14 years later.

Fort Kochi is Kochi's natural harbour, created by a massive flood in 1341. It attracted imperialists and merchants from all over the world. In the 16th century, the Portuguese built a fort here, which was later occupied by the Dutch and then the British. Today, this quarter, with its mixture of architectural styles, encapsulates Fort Kochi's tumultuous history. The most important building here is St. Francis Church, erected by the Portuguese in 1502 and considered to be among the oldest churches built by Europeans in India.

This area has now been declared a Heritage Zone to preserve its many historic buildings.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

The Killians or similar.

Day 22

Locations: Cochin

Overview:

Your India holiday tour concludes today after breakfast. If you're departing later in the evening a late check-out can be arranged at the hotel.

(B)

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 19 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 1 night onboard houseboat.
- 1 night of rail travel with shared facilities.
- 21 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 21 dinners.
- Transport in comfortable and modern coaches.
- All excursions and entrance fees as indicated.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.
- 2 internal flights and taxes.
- Services of Tour Leader for the duration of tour.

What's not included in our Tour

- International airfares and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Visa service and fee
- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.