Last Updated: June 4, 2013

Best of Southern India - AHBS

14 days: Kochi to Kochi

What's Included

Dutch (Mattencherry) Palace, Jewish Synagogue and Jewish Town, Kathakali performance, Nature trails in Wynad Sanctuary, Edakkal Pre historic caves , Safari in Madumalai National Park, Mysore Palace, Chaumundi Temple, Mamallapuram Shore Temples, Pondicherry, Cycle rickshaw tour of Madurai and Sri Meenakshi Temple, Spice Plantation tour, Excursion and local guide for Backwaters Homestay

The information in this trip details document has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and G Adventures. The itinerary featured is correct at time of printing. It may differ slightly to the one in the brochure. Occasionally our itineraries change as we make improvements that stem from past travellers, comments and our own research. Sometimes it can be a small change like adding an extra meal along the itinerary. Sometimes the change may result in us altering the tour for the coming year. Ultimately, our goal is to provide you with the most rewarding experience. Please note that our brochure is usually released in November each year. If you have booked from the previous brochure you may find there have been some changes to the itinerary.

VERY IMPORTANT: Please ensure that you print a final copy of your Trip Details to review a couple of days prior to travel, in case there have been changes that affect your plans.

VALIDITY: Valid for all trips departing January 1st, 2013 - December 31st, 2013

Itinerary

Day 1 Kochi (Cochin)

Arrive at Kochi (Cochin) at any time. There are no planned activities, so check into our hotel and enjoy the city. Attend an afternoon meeting, (approx 16.00), where you will meet your fellow group members to go over the details of your trip. Check the notice board or welcome note to confirm what time and where the group meeting will be held. After the meeting we head out to the harbour to enjoy sunset over the Chinese fishing nets followed by an optional group dinner. These old cantilevered fishing nets, quite common in Kerala, were originally brought from China. In Malayalam they're called 'cheena vala', and used mainly at high tide.

If you arrive early read our Kochi welcome note for some suggestions. There are plenty of things to do in this seaside Indian city.

Kochi was an important stop on the spice trading route due to its strategic location near the tip of the Indian subcontinent, Kochi has been a melting pot of influences since the 14th century. The city's history stretches back much farther: by 1102, Kochi was already the seat of an eponymous princely state that traced its lineages to the Kulasekhara empire. Ancient travellers and tradesmen made references to Kochi in their writings, and in 1503 Kochi became the first European colonial settlement in India when it was occupied by the Portuguese. Later, both the Dutch and British occupied Kochi, resulting in the variety of architecture, food and other influences typical of today's Kochi.

Kochi is home to the Fort with its Dutch Palace and Jew Street. The oldest church in India sits near mosques and synagogues, and Portuguese housing sits side by side with English manor homes. Ernakulam is the modern and upmarket part of town and is best reached by ferry. Marine Drive is the most popular hangout for locals and MG Road and Broadway are the lifeline of the city.

Kochi is quite famous for its exquisite gold designer jewellery and of course the finest spices which are in abundance.

Day 2 Kochi (Cochin)

Leaving early to avoid the heat, we have an orientation tour of Fort Kochi. We visit the Dutch Palace, Jew Town with it old curios shops and the more than 400 year old synagogue. We stop at the spice market before visiting St Francis Church. Vasco da Gama,

the first European explorer to set sail for India, was initially buried in here until his remains were returned to Portugal in 1539. We have a quick look at the Dutch cemetery before eventually ending up at the Chinese fishing nets where perhaps you can assist the local fisherman raise these huge nets.

In the late afternoon/early evening we will take in a performance of kathakali dancing (the Keralan tradition dance form), and you can even watch the performers put on their makeup beforehand. Considered one of the oldest dance forms in India, Kathakali is a combination of drama, dance, music and ritual. Characters with vividly painted faces and elaborate costumes re-enact stories from the Hindu epics, Mahabharatha and Ramayana.

Day 3-4 Wayanad (Kalpetta)

Estimated travel time (6 hours)

Morning 4 hours train ride to Kozhikode. Later 2 hours of scenic drive to Kalpetta. Wayanad is one of the most scenic regions of Kerala with rolling hills covered with rain forests and rich plantations of Tea, Coffee, Rubber and various spices. With aboriginals of Kerala settled in the region whose culture is still intact in this protected zone, Wayanad region is little affected with the advent of tourism.

Here we go on nature trails in Wayanad Wildlife sanctuary and visit the Edakkal Caves which is believed to have been a shelter of neolithic people.

Day 5 Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary

Estimated travel time: 4 hours

Leaving the hills for the plains, we stop for the night at the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary. Mudumalai or "Ancient Hill Range" is situated at the base of the Nilgiri Hills.

The sanctuary, provides one of the most important refuges for the elephant and bison in India. The park encompasses some 320 sq kms of undulating terrain and varrying vegetation. There is a rich diversity of wildlife within the sanctaury including Nilgiri tahr, sambar, tiger, spotted deer, flying squirrel. And more than 120 species of birds, including heron, stork, egret, kite, falcon, peafowl, woodpecker, drongo and the warbler will keep the keen bird watchers happy.

We spend part of the afternoon on a short safari spotting the variety of wildlife within the park.

Day 6-7 Mysore

Estimated travel time: 4 hours

Leaving our wildlife adventure we now imagine life as a Maharaja on a guided tour of the Mysore Palace, formerly the seat of the famed Wodeyar Maharajas of Mysore. Later, join the throngs of pilgrims at Chamundi Hills, with its Chamundeswari Temple on top, and Nandi the Bull (the bull the god Shiva rides) a short walk below. Visit the Devaraja fruit and vegetable market, which is certainly one of the most colorful in India or maybe join in a yoga class at one of the many institutes.

Along with sandalwood products, silk and crafts, Mysore is also famous for its celebration of the ten-day Navaratri (Dasara) festival held every year. According to Hindu mythology, the area around Mysore city was once the domain of the demon king Mahishasura, who grew too powerful and began to wreak havoc on the world. The Goddess Chamundeshwari defeated the demon, and became known as Mahishasura Mardhini (Slayer of Mahisha). It is this battle and the victory that are commemorated by the annual nine-day Navaratri festival. It is because of this legend that the temple of the Goddess Chamundeshwari, located atop Chamundi Hills, is such an important place of pilgrimage.

Of the 14000 metric tonnes of mulberry silk produced annually in India, Karnataka produces 9000, contributing nearly 70% of the country's total; most of this comes from the Mysore district. Go to see the local silkworm-rearing industry (seasonal) or simply haggle in the markets for clothing or raw material—this is the place for silk!

Mysore is also a popular destination for spiritual tourism, with many yoga instructors drawing international students for extended yoga programs, teachers of Sanskrit, kirtan chant, Ayurveda and other yogic forms also readily available.

On Day 6 we have an option to drive to Somnathpur one of the most famous Hoysala Temples in India. The temple is in excellent condition and has frescoed exteriors with episodes from the epics (Ramayana and Mahabrahata). We head to the train station in the evening of Day 7 to catch our overnight sleeper train to Chennai.

Day 8-9 Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram)

Estimated travel time 1.5 Hours (65 Kms)

Arriving early into Chennai (Madras) we continue south (approx 90 mins) to the small village of Mamallapuram, site of the 7th century Shore Temple, another of India's many UNESCO World Heritage sites.

In the late afternoon, perhaps after you have enjoyed a swim or jog along the beach, explore the monuments by bicycle or on foot, on our guided tour. The impressive group of monuments at Mamallapuram were sculpted by the Pallava kings during the 7th and 8th century A.D. Of these, the Shore Temple stands out in particular, owing to its extraordinary location abutting the sea. Actually a twin-temple dedicated both to Vishnu and Shiva, it was built by Narasimhavarman II (circa 690-715). The Five Rathas, sculpted in granite and situated nearby, were created by his predecessor Narasimhavarman I. Also known as Mamalla (A.D. 630-668), the great wrestler, it is from him Mamallapuram gets its name.

After the tsunami that resulted from the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake, the force of the water removed sand deposits that had covered various rocky structures, revealing parts of a previously un-excavated temple. Still submerged, the Archaeological Survey of India sent divers to begin underwater excavations of the area in February 2005, still presently underway.

Aside from its draw as a temple site, Mamallapuram is also a favorite shopping haunt for South Indian artifacts, both wooden and granite-based.

Day 10 Madurai

Estimate Travel Time: 2.5 hours drive and 5 1/2 hours train ride

In the morning we drive to Pondicherry. Pondicherry was the largest French Colony in India and was an important trading town. There is a strong French influence in the lay out, boulevards, houses although the city is still very much Indian. Later during the day we catch a day train for a 5 1/2 hours ride to Madurai.

Madurai has been an important commercial center since as early as 550 AD, but it is as a temple town that it most strongly identifies itself. Although there are many temples sprinkled throughout the city, none compares to the size and detail of Meenakshi temple.

The enormous temple complex is dedicated to Shiva, known here as Sundareshvara and his consort Parvati or Meenakshi. The credit for making the temple as splendid as it is today goes to the Nayaks who ruled Madurai from the 16th to the 18th century. Even before you pass through the massive stone walls of the temple, the nine striking gopurams (towers, actually monumental gateways covered with stucco figures of dieties, mythical animals and monsters all painted in vivid colors) which distinguish the temple loom high above. The temple's tallest spire rises as high as 60 meters, and was for many years the tallest structure in its category in Asia.

Day 11 Madurai

Early morning of day 11 we will have an interesting and unique cycle rickshaw tour of Madurai. Covering things like the fruit & vegetable market and the area where aluminum products are made. Watch the pressing of oil by bullocks and the famous Gandhi museum and palace.

After our tour of the temple complex, perhaps you want to shop for handicrafts or duck into the cool shade of the covered, stone tailor's market, where for a few rupees rows of expert tailors will whip you up a custom shirt in a manner of minutes, all done on antique foot-pump sewing machines.

In the late evening (about 9.00pm) you may like to visit the Meenakshi temple again for the night time rituals. Filled with incense, people and noise this is a wonderful spectacle.

Day 12 Thekkady (D)

Estimated travel time 4 hours

Thekkady, adjacent to Periyar National park is the spice capital of India, The rolling hills around the region grow some of the finest cardamoms in the world and are aptly called Cardamom hills, exotic spices like cloves, pepper (black gold), nutmeg, cinammon and a lot of medicinal herbs are in abundance. We do a guided tour of the spice plantations and Tea factory.

Periyar National Park is primarily famous for Elephants and wild buffaloes which can be seen if you are lucky on an optional early morning boat ride at the Periyar Lake.

Day 13 Kerala Backwaters Homestay (L,D)

Estimate Travel Time: 5.5 Hours (145kms)

In the morning we travel down to the backwaters, where we catch a private boat for the short journey (approx 15 mins) to our village homestay. Accommodation is on a multi-share basis and all the families live within a few hundred meters of each other, with at least one person in the family speaking a reasonable standard of English. Food is traditional Keralan home cooking and is superb. Lunch, dinner and tomorrows breakfast are included.

This afternoon we explore the island with a local person to observe the different facets of local life - a great chance to meet and talk with the people who live here. Strolling under the palm trees, we weave in between the rice fields that cover the island and learn more about the lifestyles of the locals. Just before sunset we jump on a small country boat and journey along with the locals to enjoy sunset on the winding backwaters. There is may be time to kick back and enjoy the local toddy (alcoholic drink made from coconut).

Note: You will only need to take a small day pack or small overnight bag with you to the home stay. Your main bags will be transferred directly to the hotel in Kochi.

Day 14 Kochi (Cochin) (B)

The morning is spent enjoying the hospitality of our family homestay. We may learn how to cook some of the wonderful food, watch the toddy tappers at work, or simply wander around the village and explore more of the life on the backwaters.

Then we travel back to our starting point at Kochi. Firstly we take our private boat (approx 1 1/2 hours) down to Alappuzha (Alleppey). Slipping silently through sleepy canals, shorelines dotted with the Chinese fishing nets, this is exactly as National Geographic describes it - one of the greatest destinations in "Gods own country". Then we jump on a local bus for our last journey (approx 2 hours) through the villages and roads of Kerala back into Fort Kochi.

The trip ends on arrival back in Kochi in the early afternoon.
If you are booking onward travel today we recommend that you don't book your flight until 4pm or later.

What's Included

Dutch (Mattencherry) Palace, Jewish Synagogue and Jewish Town, Kathakali performance, Nature trails in Wynad Sanctuary, Edakkal Pre historic caves , Safari in Madumalai National Park, Mysore Palace, Chaumundi Temple, Mamallapuram Shore Temples, Pondicherry, Cycle rickshaw tour of Madurai and Sri Meenakshi Temple, Spice Plantation tour, Excursion and local guide for Backwaters Homestay

Highlights

Relaxing in peaceful backwaters, spotting wildlife in beautiful parks, uncovering ancient temples, exploring tea and spice plantations, taking a rickshaw ride through the streets of Madurai.

Dossier Disclaimer

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Itinerary Disclaimer

While it is our intention to adhere to the route described below, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable to make alterations. The itinerary is brief, as we never know exactly where our journey will take us. Due to our style of travel and the regions we visit, travel can be unpredictable. The Trip Details document is a general guide to the tour and region and any mention of specific destinations or wildlife is by no means a guarantee that they will be visited or encountered. Aboard expedition trips visits to research stations depend on final permission.

Additionally, any travel times listed are approximations only and subject to vary due to local circumstances.

Important Notes

1. India is a country which is very different to anything you will have experienced before. Although this means it is not the easiest place to travel, this is also what makes it so special. Pollution, poverty and the crowds can result in initial culture shock but should be seen as an exciting new challenge. During our time here we have come to love this large and wonderfully different country but we know that we should always expect to encounter some difficulties along the way.
2. In India there are very different attitudes to time keeping, public cleanliness, privacy and service. Trains will sometimes be late, plumbing can sometimes be temperamental and power will often just vanish. Optimistic menus turn out to have only one dish available and everyone, just everyone, will want to know your name. If you are able to travel with a lot of patience and a healthy sense of humour, then we know that you - like all of us - will be captivated by what India has to offer.
3. Please note that this tour combines with other G Adventures tours. As such, the staff and some travel companions on your tour may have previously been traveling together with G Adventures, prior to Day 1 of your tour. Likewise, some staff and travel companions may be continuing together on another G Adventures tour, after your trip concludes.

Group Leader Description

All G Adventures group trips are accompanied by one of our Chief Experience Officers (CEO). The aim of the CEO is to take the hassle out of your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. They will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends. While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the countries visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. We also use local guides where we think more specific knowledge will add to the enjoyment of the places we are visiting - we think it's the best of both worlds.

Group Size Notes

Max 15, Avg 10

Meals Included

1 Breakfast, 1 Lunch, 2 Dinners

Meals

Eating is a big part of travelling. Travelling with G Adventures you experience the vast array of wonderful food that is available out in the world. Generally meals are not included in the trip price when there is a choice of eating options, to give you the maximum flexibility in deciding where, what and with whom to eat. It also gives you more budgeting flexibility, though generally food is cheap. Our groups tend to eat together to enable you to taste a larger variety of dishes and enjoy each other's company. There is no obligation to do this though. Your CEO will be able to suggest favourite restaurants during your trip. Vegetarians will be able to find a huge range of different foods - India is vegetarian heaven. For all trips please refer to the meals included and budget information for included meals and meal budgets.

Meal Budget

Allow USD280-340 for meals not included.

Transport

Train, local bus, charter bus, cycle-rickshaw, auto-rickshaw, ferry, private boat, bicycle, country boat.

About our Transportation

TRAIN
Traveling in India by train is an experience. Distances in India are long and Indian trains aren't the worlds fastest, but traveling in these adds a fascinating new dimension to a visitor's experience in the country. There is virtually no better way to get to make friends with the people and see the spectacular views of the diverse Indian countryside. The chaos on the Indian Railway stations is a replica of the life in India.

G Adventures uses a combination of AC 2 tier, AC 3 tier and sleeper class (for overnight journeys) and AC Chair car or second class seats for day journeys.

There are no restaurant or buffet cars on Indian Railways, but on long distance trains an attendant will appear in your coach and ask you if you would like to order food. Regular stops are made at stations where food is also available and on some trains many vendors

board the train selling chai, cold drinks and crisps and biscuits.

Don't expect pristine western standards anywhere in India, but you'll find AC2, AC3 and AC Chair class fairly clean by Indian standards, with both western-style and squat toilets usually in a reasonably sanitary condition. Sleeper Class and 2nd class toilets may be a different matter! Bring your own toilet paper and hand wash soap or liquid.

Indian trains are quite safe to travel on, even for families or women traveling alone, and you are unlikely to have any problems. Having said that, theft of luggage, although rare is not unheard of, so just for peace of mind you might like to take along a chain and padlock to secure your bags (readily available at all Indian stations).

Generally, Indian Railways are very efficient, but Indian trains do run late, and sometimes it's hours rather than minutes. Make sure you have something to occupy your time – a good book, magazine or photos of your home country and family to show the Indian travelers also waiting for the train.

ROAD
Traveling by road is certainly not what people are use to in Western countries. Rules are not always followed, drivers appear to speed, do not stay in their lanes, overtake in seemingly dangerous situations, rarely use their mirrors or driving lights at night time. The horn however is used very frequently and can range from the latest Bollywood tune to Britney Spears! Although the government is investing large sums of money improving the road infrastructure, there is a lot more to be done. As a result some of the roads are poorly maintained, pot holed and uneven. This gets even more pronounced particularly during and after the monsoon. Travel time is very long in comparison to Western countries and short distances can take a lot longer than at home.

Local Flights

All local flights are included in the cost of your tour unless otherwise noted. It is important that we have your passport information at the time of booking in order to process these tickets. Internal flight tickets are issued locally and will be given to you prior to the flight departure.

Please Note: Only 1 piece of luggage that weighs up to 15kgs will be permitted on our internal flights in India. For any extra weight the airline may charge an additional fee at the time of check-in.

Solo Travellers

We believe single travellers should not have to pay more to travel so our group trips are designed for shared accommodation and do not involve a single supplement. Single travellers joining group trips are paired in twin or multi-share accommodation with someone of the same sex for the duration of the trip. Some of our Independent trips are designed differently and single travellers on these itineraries must pay the single trip price.

Accommodation

Hotels (11 nts), homestay (1 nt, multi-share), sleeper train (1 nt)

My Own Room Exceptions

Night 7, Sleeper Train; Night 13, Homestay

About Accommodation

A variety of styles of hotels/guest houses are used in India. These can vary in terms of service, efficiency and cleanliness. In many instances they might not be like what you are used to back home. Power cuts can and are a regular occurrence in many places, especially throughout North and Central India. Although a number of hotels have generators there may be times when these won’t work. It is also recommended when you are in your room to lock the door, as staff will sometime enter without reason.

Joining Hotel

Fort Manor
D.No:1/ 508A2 / 508 A3 Nr. Fort Kochi Bus Stand,
K.B. Jacob Road,
Fort Kochi - 682 001

The following location will be used for specific departures:

Hotel Gama Heritage
For Pattalom Road, Near Bishop House
Fort Kochi
Cochin, Kerala, India
tel: +91-484-221 7475/ 85

February 9, 2013

Joining Instructions

When arriving at Kochi Airport you will need to get a taxi to take you to the hotel as public buses are not reliable and the airport is located some 30kms outside the city. The drive should take between 45-60 minutes depending on the traffic and the time of day. Please order your taxi from the prepaid taxi booth in the arrivals hall. The cost is about INR550-650. The taxi booth will give you a receipt that you need to give to the driver but not until you arrive at the hotel.

Be aware too, that touts at the airports, even at hotel-reservation counters, may try to trick you into booking a hotel room by claiming that your prior reservation is invalid. Ignore them.

If this is your first trip to India a transfer is recommended. If you have paid for an arrival transfer when you booked your trip our driver/local operator will be waiting for you with a G Adventures sign with your name on it. Please check carefully once you exit the baggage hall. Please contact Mr. Sathish if you don't see your transfers in Kochi and his mobile number is (+91) 99944248795. The office number is (+91-44) 27443260.

Arrival Complications

We don't expect any problems, and nor should you, but if for any reason you are unable to commence your trip as scheduled, as soon as possible please contact your starting point hotel, requesting that you speak to or leave a message for your CEO (if you are not on a group tour please refer to the emergency contact details provided in this dossier). If you are unable to get in touch with your CEO, please refer to our emergency contact details. If you have pre-booked an airport transfer and have not made contact with our representative within 30 minutes of clearing customs and immigration, we recommend that you make your own way to the Starting Point hotel, following the Joining Instructions. Please apply to your travel agent on your return for a refund of the transfer cost if this occurs.

Emergency Contact

Should you need to contact us during a situation of dire need, it is best to first call either the G Adventures Local Representative (if one is listed below) or our G Adventures Local Office. If for any reason you do not receive an immediate answer, please leave a detailed message and contact information, so they may return your call and assist you as soon as possible.

AIRPORT TRANSFER
If you have purchased an arrival through G Adventures or if an arrival transfer is included in the cost of your tour, please note that:

Your arrival transfer has been arranged based on flight information provided to us. If you are advised of a flight schedule change within 48 hours of your scheduled arrival time, we will do our best to rearrange your arrival transfer however we cannot guarantee this. If your arrival transfer does not arrive within 30 minutes after you have exited the arrivals area please take a taxi to your start point hotel.

If your call is specifically concerning Airport Transfer complications please call our local G Adventures Transfer providers directly at:
Cochin International Airport:
Sathish: +91 9994 4248795

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS
G Adventures Local Office (South India)
During office hours, Mon-Fri 9am-5pm:
From oustide of India: +91 44 27443260
From within India: 044 27443260

G Adventures South Asia Manager, Rishab (Delhi, India)
Emergency number:
From outside of India: +91 99 7179 5447

From within Delhi: 99 7179 5447
From within India, but outside Delhi: 099 7179 5447

G Adventures Office Bangkok, Thailand
During Office hours (Weekdays, 9am-5pm Local Time): +66-02-3815574

If you are unable for any reason to contact our local office, please call the numbers listed below, which will connect you directly with our 24 hour Sales team, who will happily assist you.

Toll-free, North America only: 1 888 800 4100
Calls from UK: 0844 272 0000
Calls from Germany: 01805 70 90 30 00
Calls from Australia: 1 300 796 618
Calls from New Zealand: 0800 333 307
Outside North America, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and the UK: +1 416 260 0999

What to Take

What you need to bring depends on the trip you have chosen and the countries or regions you are planning to visit. We suggest that you pack as lightly as possible as your are expected to carry your own luggage. As a rule we try not to have to walk more than 15-20 mintues with your bags which is why we recommend keeping the weight of your bags between 10-15kg/22-30lb. Suitcases are not recommended for G Adventures trips! Most travellers carry a backpack or rolling bag of small to medium size (no XXL ones please!) as they need to fit under the beds when travelling on sleeper trains. You will also need a day pack/bag to carry water, cameras and other electronics like ipods and mobile phones. If your trip involves overnights in homestays, villages or camping then you usually have the opportunity to rent sleeping bags if need be instead of bringing them with you.

Checklist

Passport (with photocopies)
Travel insurance (with photocopies)
Airline tickets (with photocopies)
USD cash
Credit or debit card (see personal spending money)
G Adventures vouchers, pre-departure information and dossier
Any entry visas or vaccination certificates required
Day pack for daily personal items
Lock for all bags
Wet wipes / Moist towelettes
Alarm clock
Flashlight
Sun hat, Sun block, Sunglasses
Insect Repellent
Water bottle and Plastic mug for train journeys
Ear plugs for train journeys or light sleepers
Small towel and swim wear
Toiletries (biodegradable)
Sturdy walking shoes/Sport sandals
Money belt
Shorts
Long trousers
Hiking pants/track pants
Shirts/T-shirts
Warm clothes for November-February. Fleece, Jacket, hat and gloves
Umbrella or waterproof jacket.
Cover for backpack or plastic bags to keep clothes dry.
Camera and film
Reading/writing material
Binoculars
Pocketknife

First-aid kit (should contain lip salve, Aspirin, Band Aids, anti-histamine, Imodium or similar tablets for mild cases of diarrhea, re-hydration powder, extra prescription drugs you may be taking).

Laundry

Laundry facilities are offered by some of our hotels for a charge. There will be times when you may want to or have to do your own laundry so we suggest you bring non-polluting/biodegradable soap.

Visas

Please note that visas for India are the responsibility of the individual traveller. The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. For the most up to date information please check your governments foreign ministry website or with you travel agent as rules do change. It is important that you check for yourself. For most travellers there will probably have an embassy and consulate in the country that you live in.

Standard Indian tourist visas are good for 6 months with multiple entry and exits. VISA IS NOT AVAILABLE AT PORT OF ENTRY AND must be obtained in advance.

For nationals of Afghanistan, China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan and Bangladesh if you are planning on entering India multiple times in a two month period will need to get special authorization.

a) If you are already in India you must register with FRRO (Foreign Regional Registration office).

b) If you are still outside of India you must advise consulate or embassy at time of visa application of your plans. You will need to provide supporting documents which includes airline tickets.

Detailed Trip Notes

In India English is widely spoken and transportation and infrastructure is good, but please remember that this is India- expect the unexpected! If you are able to bring with you a lot of patience, a great sense of humour and a willingness to try and interact with the local people, your travel experience wil be greatly enhanced

Spending Money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping and tipping. Please also remember the following specific recommendations when planning your trip.

Money Exchange

As currency exchange rates in Asia fluctuate often we ask that you refer to the following website for daily exchange rates: www.xe.com
As of Feb 2012 the exchange rate for INDIA was 1 USD = 49.00 INR (Indian Rupees). There are many ATM machines that accept both Visa and Mastercard but these are limited to major cities. Major credit cards are accepted in most shops but they may charge a 2-4% transaction fee.

Emergency Fund

Please also make sure you have access to at least an additional USD $200 (or equivalent) as an 'emergency' fund, to be used when circumstances outside our control (ex. a natural disaster) require a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence!

Departure Tax

All departure taxes should be included in your international flight ticket.

Tipping

It is customary in Asia to tip service providers such as waiters, at approximately 10%, depending on the service. Tipping is expected - though not compulsory - and shows an expression of satisfaction with the people who have assisted you on your tour. Although it may not be customary to you, it is of considerable significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels. There are several times during the trip where there is opportunity to tip the local guides or drivers we use. You may do this individually, or your CEO will offer to collect the money and tip as a group. Recommendations for tipping drivers and local guides would range from USD1-2 per person per day depending on the quality and length of the service; ask your CEO for specific recommendations based on

the circumstances and culture. Also at the end of each trip if you felt your G Adventures CEO did an outstanding job, tipping is appreciated. The amount is entirely a personal preference; however as a guideline USD20-30 per person, per week can be used.

Optional Activities

We suggest you bring along USD50 for additional sightseeing, including

Kochi - Jewish Synagogue - INR5
Kochi - Kathakali Dance - INR150
Kochi - Boat to Vypeen Island- INR20
Madurai - Ghandi Museum – INR50
Mysore - Palm Reading - INR300
Mysore -Tipu's Mausoleum - INR100
Mysore - Somanathpur - INR100
Periyar - Ayurvedic Massage - INR500
Periyar - Spice tour (excl transport) - INR100
Periyar - Jungle Walk - INR500

All prices are per person (unless stated otherwise), and are subject to change as services are provided by third party operators.

Health

Please note inoculations may be required for the country visited. It is your responsibility to consult with your travel doctor for up to date medical travel information well before departure.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information well before departure. We recommend that you carry a First Aid kit and hand sanitizers / antibacterial wipes as well as any personal medical requirements. Please be aware that sometimes we are in remote areas and away from medical facilities, and for legal reasons our CEO are prohibited from administering any type of drug including headache tablets, antibiotics, etc. In Asia pharmacies tend to stock the same western drugs as you get at home but they are usually produced locally so please bring the full drug name with you when trying to purchase a prescription drug. When selecting your trip please carefully read the brochure and itinerary and assess your ability to cope with our style of travel. Please refer to the Physical and Culture Shock ratings for trip specific information. G Adventures reserves the right to exclude any traveller from all or part of a trip without refund if in the reasonable opinion of our group CEO they are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group.

Safety and Security

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure. We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe keeping of your passport, air tickets, travellers' cheques, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling. Many of the hotels we use have safety deposit boxes, which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage. When travelling on a group trip, please note that your CEO has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns. Your CEO will accompany you on all included activities. During your trip you will have some free time to pursue your own interests, relax and take it easy or explore at your leisure. While your CEO will assist you with options available in a given location please note that any optional activities you undertake are not part of your itinerary, and we offer no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgment when selecting an activity in your free time. Although the cities visited on tour are generally safe during the day, there can be risks to wandering throughout any major city at night. It is our recommendation to stay in small groups and to take taxis to and from restaurants, or during night time excursions.

Protests and Demonstrations- Protests and demonstrations, even those that are well intended, have the potential to turn violent with no warning. Counter protests can also turn violent. Action by security forces to disperse demonstrators and protesters may occur at any time. If you are in an area where demonstrators or protesters are gathering, avoid the temptation of staying for a good photo opportunity and leave the area immediately.

Water based activities have an element of danger and excitement built into them. We recommend only participating in water based activities when accompanied by a guide(s). We make every reasonable effort to ensure the fun and adventurous element of any water based activities (in countries with varying degrees of operating standards) have a balanced approach to safety. It is our policy not to

allow our CEOs to make arrangements on your behalf for water based activities that are not accompanied by guide(s).

Swimming, including snorkeling, is always at your own risk.

We take all prudent measures in relation to your safety. For ways to further enhance your personal safety while traveling, please visit:

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www.gadventures.com/travel-resources/safety/

Trip Specific Safety

We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe keeping of your passport, air tickets, travellers' cheques, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling. Many of the hotels we use have safety deposit boxes which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

Medical Form

Our small group adventures bring together people of all ages. It is very important you are aware that, as a minimum, an average level of fitness and mobility' is required to undertake our easiest programs. Travellers must be able to walk without the aid of another person, climb 3-4 flights of stairs, step on and off small boats, and carry their own luggage at a minimum. Travellers with a pre-existing medical condition are required to complete a short medical questionnaire, which must be signed by their physician. This is to ensure that travellers have the necessary fitness and mobility to comfortably complete their chosen trip. While our CEOs work hard to ensure that all our travellers are catered for equally, it is not their responsibility to help individuals who cannot complete the day's activities unaided. Please refer to the physical ratings in this Trip Details document for more information.
Please note that all passengers traveling to Antarctica are required to fill out this questionnaire.

The medical questionnaire can be found online at:

www.gadventures.com/medical-form.

A Couple of Rules

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on any trips. Possessing or using drugs not only contravenes the laws of the land but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for our travellers. Our philosophy of travel is one of respect towards everyone we encounter, and in particular the local people who make the world the special place it is. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our CEOs have the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes.

Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance: Travel insurance is compulsory in order to participate on any of our trips. When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance has been sighted by your CEO, who will take note of your insurance details. When selecting a travel insurance policy please bear in mind that all clients must have medical coverage and that we require a minimum coverage of USD 200,000 for repatriation and emergency rescue. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects. If you have credit card insurance we require proof of purchase of the trip (a receipt of credit card statement) with a credit card in your name. Contact your bank for details of their participating insurer, the level of coverage and emergency contact telephone number.

Planeterra-The G Adventures Foundation

Through our commitment to responsible tourism we have developed the Planeterra Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of people and communities around the world through support of international charities, local organizations and community projects in the places that we visit on our tours. G Adventures matches all individual donations and pays all administration costs, which means that 100% of each donation is doubled and goes directly to support our projects. For more information about Planeterra and the projects we support, or to make a donation, please visit www.planeterra.org

Planeterra Dollar-A-Day Program
Our Dollar-A-Day Program provides travellers with the opportunity to help us give back to the people and places visited on our tours by donating one dollar per day for the duration of their tour. 100% of these proceeds will go directly to support our Planeterra projects.

To participate in this program please indicate at the time of booking that you would like to participate in G Adventures' Dollar-A-Day program, either by clicking the check box online, or by advising your G Adventures specialist or travel agent. (Note: Donation will be charged in the currency of your booking)

Local Dress

In Asia the dress standard is more conservative than it is back home. When packing try to pick loose, lightweight, long clothing that will keep you cool in the usually hot and humid climate of Asian summers. In predominately Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim countries we ask that you dress respectfully and avoid very short shorts/skirts and singlets/tanktops when visiting small rural communities or visiting temples or mosques or other holy sites as this may restrict your entry.

India is very conservative and you should dress accordingly. As a general guideline shoulders and knees should be covered at all times. The wearing of shorts is not allowed as it will restrict your entry into buildings of a religious nature and family homes. A light water and windproof jacket is useful and a hat essential.
NB: WE STRESS THAT IT CAN BE VERY COLD IN THE HILLS DURING THE MONTHS FROM DECEMBER TO FEBRUARY.

NB: During our trip there will be many opportunities for you to meet and "talk" with locals. One way to start any conversation is with pictures. We recommend that you bring some photos/postcards of your family, home, city or country where you live, animals peculiar to your country etc.

Feedback

After your travels, we want to hear from you! Your feedback information is so important to us that we'll give you 5% off the price of your next G Adventures trip if your feedback is completed on-line within 30 days of finishing your trip. Your tour evaluation will be e-mailed to you 24 hours after the conclusion of your trip. If you do not receive the tour evaluation link in the days after your tour has finished, please drop us a line at customerservice@gadventures.com and we will send it on to you.

Newsletter

Our adventure travel e-newsletter is full of travel news, trip information, interesting stories and contests. To avoid missing out on special offers and updates from G Adventures, subscribe at www.gadventures.com/newsletters/

Stay current on how our company invests in our global community through our foundation – Planeterra. Sign up for Planeterra's monthly news to learn more about how to give back and support the people and places we love to visit.

Travel Forum - The Watering Hole

Be sure to stop by The Watering Hole, our adventure travel forum. If you're interested in meeting others booked on your upcoming trip, check out the Departure Lounge section of our forum and introduce yourself. Otherwise, just drop in at anytime to share some travel tips, ask questions, meet other travellers and quench your thirst for travel. Our forum is located at wateringhole.gadventures.com.