



# Kerala Bikes, Hikes & Boats



high places  
TAILOR-MADE  
ADVENTURES



Fairly Easy

## TOUR INFORMATION

**ACTIVITY:** FAMILY

**TOUR DURATION:** 15 DAYS

**MIN AGE FOR TRIPS:** 18+

## INCLUSIONS

- 9 NIGHTS HOTEL
- 2 NIGHTS CAMPING
- 2 NIGHTS HOUSEBOAT
- 14 BREAKFASTS, 5 DINNERS, 5 LUNCHES

*This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.*

## Highlights

- Original itinerary, rich & colourful, 'off the beaten track'
- Hike above the tea estates in the Cardamom Hills
- Backwater boat trip & golden beaches
- Wildlife Park: elephant, wild boar, flying squirrels, fish eagles...
- A memorable & authentic experience in a wonderful climate

## Itinerary

This itinerary is flexible and should be seen as a guide only. Local conditions, weather or fitness could lead to changes in our daily plans. All times and distances are approximate. **(B, L, D)** refers to meals included in the trip cost, i.e. **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**.

### Day 1

Arrive Cochin and transfer to our accommodation at Fort Cochin, the site of historic palaces, churches, an ancient Jewish synagogue and architecture reflecting the visits of Portuguese, British and Dutch traders. Hotel

### Day 2

Cochin is a diverse and colourful port/city, spreading over 4-5 islands and peninsulas. The main town of Ernakulum is on the mainland. All the islands are connected by a ferryboat network and therein lies the charm of an exploratory two days here. Around the headland of Fort Cochin, phalanxes of cantilevered Chinese fishing boats dip into the sea at high tide. In its back streets, there is an aroma of ginger, cardamom and other spices, piled high in every nook and cranny. Hotel **(B)**



**Day 3 - Drive to Munnar**

Inland now, and after the coastal heat, more familiar English summer temperatures, and a landscape of rolling hills, tea, coffee, rubber plantations and mist-covered valleys and woods. Munnar is the centre of the surrounding tea industry and in some ways has changed little since pre-independence. Beyond the tea plantations, the mountains rise to over 2500m. It is not unlike the English Lake District but with more forest and less lakes. The main difference however is that apart from High Places groups, virtually no-one walks here! **(B)**

**Day 4 - Cycle around Munnar**

Cycling around Munnar. At 1600m above sea-level Munnar in the Western Ghats is situated at the confluence of three mountain streams, the Muthirapuzha, the Nallathanni and the Kundala. It was a favoured summer resort of the British Government during the colonial era and the imprint left behind by the British can still be seen in the form of English style bungalows. Munnar is a superb place for cycling, the roads and trails are undulating and occasionally challenging, but as ever, there are plenty of downhill stretches to compensate for the steep climbs. Today you head out from Munnar to Top Station in the Kannan Devan hills which was used for tea transportation between Munnar, Madupatty and down to Kottagundi. This part of the journey provides some epic views of rolling hills and lush valleys. **(B)**

**Day 5 - First day's hike**

Today, will have an easy hike through the tea estates to the highest tea estate in the World, today will start our hike from Suryanelli estate (24 kilometers approx from Munnar town) the whole trek we will have gradual ascending from the height of 1700 meters to 2160 meters the trek will be about 10 kilometers. We will pass the camp to visit the one of the oldest tea factory in this region built at 1935 with orthodox method process, offers one of the best organic tea, we can taste the fresh tea after the factory visit and walk back to campsite, overnight at the comfortable tents. **(B,L,D)**

**Day 6 - Hike to Rhodo Valley**

Our camp is at the eastern slope of the western Ghats so it is one of best camps for the sunrise so will have a early wake up call for the sunrise and free time up to breakfast, after the breakfast a short walk

through the tea fields will take you to the foot hill of Meesapulimalai “the second highest peak in South India, before reaching the rolling grass land we need to cross through the shola forest on the ridge offers spectacular view of both the low land of Tamil Nadu and the peaks as well, will have one stretch moderate climb for 1-1.30 hours to summit the peak (2637 meters). After a short refreshment break the trek will continue through a valley where the rhododendrons and pine forests grows wild and of course a unique eco system of grass land and streams through them, to the campsite. Overnight camp in comfortable tents by the side of gurgling mountain streams at Rodho-valley with the beautiful natural brooks and the meadows of Western Ghats. **(B, L, D)**



#### **Day 7 - Final day's hike and descent**

After breakfast we will have around 6-7 hours trek through by the side of crystal clear stream, waterfalls (seasonal), and through pine and gum trees (eucalyptus) plantations to Yellapatty valley where our jeeps will be ready to pick you up, with an hour drive ( 25 KMS ) we will reach Munnar and proceed to Munnar. **(B,L,D)**

#### **Day 8 - To Periyar**

Option of cycling off-road on this day A drive over rolling hills and coffee plantations to Periyar wildlife sanctuary with the chance of seeing Indian elephants, wild boars, lion-tailed monkeys, ibex, tigers, leopards and sloth bears as well as great hornbills, kites, darters, herons, egrets, owls and kingfishers. We will have our bikes along and if there are opportunities we could cycle around today as well. **(B)**

#### **Day 9 - Drive to Kumarakum**

A drive past rice fields, banana, tapioca, rubber and coffee plantation to Komarakum. We spend next three days in a local village and experience local culture and come face to face with local people. Watch Kathakali dance and prayer ceremonies and other interesting activities. **(B,L,D)**

#### **Day 10 - Cycle along the Backwaters**

This morning its time to mount up again and cycle along the shoreline of Vembanad Lake taking the trails that skirt the paddy and coconut fields. A pause to catch your breath in one of the many villages which lie close to the lake before continuing for lunch at the houseboat. The rest of the day is free for you to do a little more cycling. **(B,L,D)**

**Day 11 - Continue cycling**

After spending a peaceful night on the houseboat, the following morning after breakfast at the houseboat we find a suitable place to go in the country from which we can take a bike ride out into the countryside and see how the locals live here in the area. **(B)**

**Day 12 - Kayak experience on the lagoons**

House Boat arrives in the morning; Checking out the houseboat early in the morning to reach the start point for kayaking; around 3-4 hrs. Later we drive along the coast past beaches with rolling waves and fishermen hauling nets to reach the town of Varkala. **(B)**

**Day 13 - Under the palms**

Varkala's beautiful beaches are still relatively lesser visited but could be more popular during holidays. Time for soaking it up in the sun. **(B)**

**Day 14 - Departure**

A final wake up in paradise! Transfer to Trivandrum for the international flight. **(B)**

**Kovalam extension**

**DAY 14** see above.

**DAY 15** Kovalam.

**DAY 16** Transfer to Trivandrum Airport and depart.

**What our clients say ?**

"Experiencing this part of India. Had been to northern India several years ago and this had a very different vib. The wide range of knowledge of our leader gave us a lot of insight into the culture, history, flora and fauna. Enjoyed the various people that we met along the way. Because the focus is not doing the tourist things, but getting to know the people of the area and their culture on a more personal basis" **Marie and Cindy Oct'14**

“This was a very happy holiday for us in every way. The leaders were sensitive to everyone's individual needs and were always approachable and well informed. We had a group who got on well together which made the interactions fun and the shared experiences more interesting. The varied experiences suited us so well and we loved the eclectic accommodation - please think about exploring possibilities for trips like this in other areas...”

**Roger & Jennifer Marston Journey through Kerala Feb**

## India

High Places began in India in 1987 when our very first trip set off to trek in the Garhwal Himalayas in north India. We have gradually widened our destinations and now also go to Ladakh, Sikkim and Kerala. If you are looking for an authentic and active holiday in India, we are the specialists. Moreover we continue to hold India in great respect and have a deep regard for the land and its peoples. To travel with High Places here will disprove many of the myths you might hold and leave you with a sense of wonder and incredulity. There is a life-force in India which we may already have lost in the west. You must go and see for yourself.

## Kerala

Kerala is a wonderful part of India and this trip takes in some fantastic cycling with amazing scenery. The holiday starts and finishes in Cochin taking in the hill stations and tea plantations of Munnar, the cardomom fields of Thodupuzha and the backwaters of Kumarakom, With a daily mileage of around 60km and some longish ascents (and descents!) and plenty of stops for refreshments and photographs, this moderately challenging trip is suitable for all regular cyclists. Accommodation is in some lovely hotels and, on the backwaters, a houseboat. As we make the return journey towards Cochin we will be cycling along the Old Beach Road, an experience definitely not to be missed.

## Language and religion

There are 14 major languages in India and around 200 minor languages and dialects. Malayalam is the spoken language in Kerala. It came as a shock to discover that our hard-learned Hindi was virtually useless here. English is often spoken but is not as widespread as in other parts of India. Over 25% of the population is Christian, with Hinduism and Islam being the other main religions in this largely tolerant pluralistic society. An often surprising characteristic of Kerala are the white, Christian churches which are to be seen everywhere. Every school seems to be called 'St George's' or 'St Boniface' and buses and lorries bear large names 'Jesus Christ' or 'Holy Mary'.

## Accommodation

On this trip all of the places we stay are friendly and with character, and in diverse locations. A comfortable guesthouse in Munnar, Cochin, beautifully crafted Houseboat on backwaters. All accommodation is double or twin share unless a single supplement has been confirmed.

## Food

Breakfast is included throughout the trip, on some days we will have lunch and dinners included. This allows you the option of trying a wide range of local restaurants which is very much part of the adventure. See day to day itinerary for details of which meals are included. We try to advice on eating tips in towns and the group often decides to eat together. Cuisine in Kerala is delicious. Vegetables and fish spiced with pepper, turmeric, cardamom and ginger, tempered with coconut milk and yoghurts make for many memorable meals during the trip. And the masala dosas!!

## Health and hygiene

We have an excellent record of staying fit and well in India. The key seems to be our enthusiasm for Indian vegetarian food (most of India is vegetarian) and care with water, avoiding salads, and keeping hands clean.

## Tipping

It is custom and practice to tip in India. You should perhaps allow the equivalent of around £ 60 / US \$100 / NZ \$120 per person. Try to avoid giving gifts or cash to children or anyone who has not rendered a service.

## Climate

Kerala is tropical and the climate, moderated by sea breezes, is wonderful. The most comfortable months are from Time to visit is from November to March when daytime temperatures are around 30°C (warm) with balmy evenings near the coast and with the added altitude, the hills are cooler and chill mists sometimes sweep in dramatically and during November to March day time temperatures in hills can be around 20°C. By January there is virtually no rainfall. On most of our trips we have had unbroken sunshine every day. Short sharp tropical rainstorms may sometimes be a possibility.

## Indian Visas

A full passport is required to apply for the Indian visa, with a validity of at least 6 months beyond the intended duration of stay in the country. It is the client's responsibility to complete all the application procedures and obtain their visas before the intended date of departure. A simplified facility of applying for an eVisa is now available to British passport holders, this will entitle the applicants to a 60 day tourist visa, for more details please log on to the official website of Indian Government <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/> Alternatively UK passport holders can apply themselves for Indian Visa through India High Commissions Visa service VFS by logging on to <http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/>. Current visa fee for British passport holders

