



ACADEMY  
TRAVEL

TAILORED  
SMALL GROUP  
JOURNEYS

# FABRIC OF SOUTHERN INDIA

TEXTILES & CRAFTS  
FROM CHENNAI TO KOCHI

## OVERVIEW

The lush tropical landscapes and vibrant cities and towns of Southern India make this region a feast for the senses on every level. Known as the subcontinent's steamy heartland its fascinating history is reflected in its delicious cuisine, its vibrant festivals and its rich material culture.

Led by India specialist, Judy Tenzing, this 19-day tour will introduce you to the region, with a focus on its exceptional textile and crafts heritage. Through visits to arts and craft centres and hands-on workshops in textile dyeing and decorative techniques, we'll learn how time-honoured practices are being revived and relaunched as ethical and sustainable industries benefiting the local population.

From the elegant French colonial influence in Pondicherry to a tea estate in the hills near Munnar, the silk city of Ramanagara and the palm fringed waterways of Alleppy, the tour experience is as diverse as this extraordinary region.



## TOUR LEADER

**Judy Tenzing** has a degree in South Asian History. She has been variously living, working, and studying India for over 40 years. Her passion for the great sub-continent has become an integral part of life and her tours enable her to share this with her fellow travellers.

## TOUR DATES

**January 3-21, 2025** | 19 Days

## TOUR PRICE

**\$9,980** per person, twin share  
**\$2,220** single supplement

## TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

## GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

## ITINERARY

Chennai (1 night), Pondicherry (2 nights), Chennai (2 nights), Mysuru (2 nights), Kannur (3 nights), Calicut (2 nights), Pollachi (2 nights), Munnar (2 nights), Kochi (2 nights)

## INCLUSIONS

**18** nights' accommodation in centrally located 4 and 5-star hotels. Airport-hotel transfers as indicated. All breakfasts, 12 lunches and 10 dinners. Services of an expert tour leader and an experienced tour manager throughout. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.



## DETAILED ITINERARY

### Start & Finish

The tour begins on Friday 3 January at Chennai Airport, with individual transfers arranged to the Trident Hotel, Chennai.

The tour ends at 1.30pm Tuesday January 21, with a transfer to Cochin International Airport for your homeward flight.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

### Friday 3 January

#### Arrive Chennai

Arriving at Chennai Airport today you will be met and transferred to our hotel. As flights are on an individual basis, no activities have been planned for today. Overnight Chennai

### Saturday 4 January

#### To Pondicherry

Meeting our tour leader after breakfast this morning, we depart Chennai and drive to the seaside city of Pondicherry, once the centre of French trading interests in India. The city's colonial history is a turbulent one, with French involvement preceded by the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Danes, and the British before Pondicherry was restored to the union of independent India in 1954. The city is a fascinating mix of east and west and a lasting French influence can be seen in the city's architecture and town planning, as well as its language, food and local culture. We enjoy an orientation tour of the city before checking into our hotel. There is time to relax before our welcome dinner this evening. Overnight Pondicherry (B, D)

### Sunday 5 January

#### In Pondicherry

Today begins with a sightseeing tour of the French Quarter by cycle-rickshaws, at a pace ideally suited to the quiet elegance of the neighbourhood. We then join our coach for the short trip to Auroville, a planned, experimental village founded in 1968, which welcomes residents from around the world. Here we visit the Colours of Nature, a research centre focused on creating an environmentally friendly, vegetable dyeing process. In our hands-on workshop we can try several fabric painting and dyeing techniques with natural colours, as well as Shibori stitching. After lunch in a local restaurant, we continue to Atelier Shanti, a rehabilitation centre that provides workshops in dying yarn, weaving and embroidery for local women, who have a safe place where they can live and work. The evening is at leisure. Overnight Pondicherry (B, L)

## TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

### Extraordinary Landscapes

Experience the beauty of South India from the elegance of Pondicherry to the lush mountain tea plantations near Munnar and palm fringed lakes and canals of Alleppy.

### Creative Workshops

Enjoy hands-on workshops exploring both traditional and modern techniques in fabric dyeing and decoration with some of the region's most innovative local enterprises.

### Textiles with History

Discover the long history of silk production in Mysuru and the importance of the humble, hand woven cotton khadi cloth to India's independence movement and championed by Mahatma Gandhi.

### Pongal Festival

Celebrate the traditional harvest festival with the locals in the villages around Pollachi, where streets and houses are decorated with vibrant designs made from coloured rice flour.

### Local Communities

Learn about the exciting initiatives, both public and private, helping revive traditional textile arts and support local communities in need.



Atelier Shanti Yarn



## **Monday 6 January** **Pondicherry to Chennai**

Departing Pondicherry this morning we return to Chennai for a better look at this fascinating city. Known as Madras under colonial rule, the city became one of the major commercial and administrative centres of the British East India Company and a bastion of the British Empire. With temples dating back to the 7th century BCE and one of the largest collections of heritage buildings in India, the city today is a unique blend of ancient traditions and cultures co-existing with modern day industry and commerce. En-route to Chennai we visit the Dakshina Chitra Living Museum, an open-air cultural space dedicated to the promotion and preservation of the art, architecture, lifestyles, crafts and performing arts of India's southern states. Arriving at our hotel, there is time to relax before we meet for dinner this evening. Overnight Chennai (B, D)

## **Tuesday 7 January** **Kalamkari Workshop**

This morning we travel to the Kalakshetra Foundation, a centre for the study and preservation of heritage crafts and performing arts, set amongst 100 acres by the Chennai seashore. Here we enjoy a hands-on workshop in Kalamkari, an intricate style of hand-painting onto cloth which originated in the modern-day states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana several hundred years ago. The process of creating a Kalamkari painting is as elaborate as the delicate and detailed designs produced and was often used to portray scenes from sacred texts such as the Mahabharata, Ramayana and Bhagavatam for display as decorative backdrops in temples. Returning to Chennai the evening is at leisure. Overnight Chennai (B, L)

## **Wednesday 8 January** **Chennai to Mysuru**

An early start today as we head to the train station to board the Shatabdi Express for Bangalore. Meeting our coach in Bangalore we make our way to nearby Ramanagara, a town known as Silk City in a region famous for its silk industry. We visit the Ramanagara Silk Cocoon Market, one of the largest cocoon markets in Asia, selling upwards of 40,000kgs of cocoons each day. The market is a hive of activity, and it is fascinating to see the various types of cocoons being traded. After time to explore the market and a break for lunch we visit a local village where we see what is involved in extracting the silk thread from the cocoons. Rejoining our coach, we continue to Mysuru. Dinner tonight is in our hotel. Overnight Mysuru (B, L, D)

## **Thursday 9 January** **Cotton and Silk**

This morning we visit a Khadi weaving centre, established in the village of Badanavalu in 1927 by four women from the Dalit or untouchable strata of Indian society. A hand spun



Mysore Palace



Handloom Workshop

and woven cotton cloth promoted by Mahatma Gandhi as a symbol of self-sufficiency, khadi is an essential part of the story of India's independence movement. Returning to Mysuru we tour the Government silk factory, where we follow the fascinating process of silk manufacture from cocoon through to finished garment. Mysuru has long been famous for its silk production and the state of Karnataka contributes nearly 45% of India's total mulberry silk. Our final visit today is to Mysore Palace, an extraordinary, sprawling Indo-Saracenic building designed by renowned British architect Henry Irwin for the former ruling dynasty of Mysuru and completed in 1912. Dinner tonight is in our hotel. Overnight Mysuru (B, L, D)

### **Friday 10 January**

#### **Mysuru to Kannur**

We have a day of travel ahead of us so, after an early breakfast, we stretch our legs and learn a little more about the history and culture of Mysuru with a walking tour of the historical centre, taking us past many of the city's magnificent monuments, temples, and public buildings as well as the centuries old Devaraja Market, a lively bazaar filled with spices, silk and sandalwood. We then join our coach and travel to Kannur, stopping en-route for lunch and arriving early evening. Our destination is the Niraamaya Retreat, an eco-friendly resort near the Kuttikol River in the beautiful Malabar region of Kerala. After checking in we meet for dinner in our hotel. Overnight Kannur (B, L, D)

### **Saturday 11 January**

#### **Kannur textiles and art**

The city of Kannur has a long history of high-quality handloomed textile production and today we visit a thriving local co-operative handloom weaving workshop. These workshops pool individual resources for a common economic aim but also play an integral part in keeping the local handloom industry alive and viable. As we tour the workshop we'll have the warping, winding, dyeing, and weaving processes explained. After lunch at a nearby restaurant, we visit the Kerala Folklore Academy. Established in 1995 by the Government of Kerala, the aim of this independent centre for cultural affairs is to promote and preserve traditional Kerala arts forms and provide financial assistance and incentives to local folk artists. The Academy is based at the serene Chirakkal Kovilakam, a former residence of the royal family, built in traditional Kerala style. Returning to our hotel the evening is at leisure. Overnight Kannur (B, L)

### **Sunday 12 January**

#### **Kannur at leisure**

Today is a free day to relax, enjoy a local walk, do a bit of shopping, or indulge in one of the therapeutic Ayurvedic spa treatments offered by our hotel. We meet this evening for dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight Kannur (B, D)



Beetle leaf for sale



Tasara Centre

## Monday 13 January Kannur to Calicut

Departing Kannur this morning we head to Calicut. On arrival we'll enjoy lunch in a local restaurant before making our way to Kerala's oldest spice bazaar and local markets. A major centre of trade from antiquity, Calicut was known as the 'City of Spices'. Today we walk to the legendary Mithai Theruvu or sweet meat street, the best place to buy Kozhikodan Halwa, a famous local delicacy made with coconut oil and seasoned with dry fruits. There is then time to explore the rows of small shops selling everything from bangles to brass lamps. The region is popular for its local handicrafts and clothes, both muslin and handloom, which are also available at the main market areas. Returning to our hotel the evening is at leisure. Overnight Calicut (B, L)

## Tuesday 14 January Tasara Centre in Beypore

After breakfast we make the short drive to the nearby town of Beypore where we visit the Tasara Centre for Creative Weaving. Tasara is the Sanskrit word for a weaver's shuttle and the Centre provides innovative training not only in weaving but also in techniques such as dyeing (chemical and natural printing) block and screen printing, eco-printing, shibori and batik. Of special interest is the Centre's emphasis on a contemporary approach to design and technique, which has attracted artists and weavers from around the world. Tasara batiks are well known in textile circles and this technique will be the focus of our hands-on workshop today. We return to Calicut in the afternoon and meet for dinner in our hotel this evening. Overnight Calicut (B, D)

## Wednesday 15 January Calicut to Pollachi

Departing Calicut this morning we spend much of the day on the scenic drive through the mountains which divide Kerala and Tamil Nadu, enjoying lunch en-route. Our destination is Coco Lagoon, an elegant and serene resort nestled amongst coconut groves on the outskirts of the town of Pollachi in Tamil Nadu, the ideal base for our explorations of the coming days. The evening is at leisure. Overnight Pollachi (B, L)

## Thursday 16 January Pollachi

Pongal, the traditional harvest festival, is celebrated in many of the South Indian states in mid-January. The festival honours Lord Surya Narayan, the Sun God and ruler of the planets, and is associated with crop harvesting. It takes its name from the traditional dish of rice boiled in milk and the local cane sugar known as jaggery, which is ritually offered to Lord Surya during the festival. Our visit to the region coincides with the main day of the festival so this morning we tour the local villages where festival celebrations include the decoration of houses and streets with banana and mango leaves and



Munnar



Alleppy

vibrant geometric patterns made with coloured rice flour. After lunch in a local restaurant, we return to our hotel where there is time to relax or enjoy the resort's lovely swimming pool before we meet for dinner. Overnight Pollachi (B, L, D)

### **Friday 17 January Pollachi to Munnar**

Before leaving Pollachi this morning we visit Ethicus, an innovative fashion company founded by a husband and wife team who've turned a background in traditional cotton production into an ethical and sustainable enterprise – one of the first of its kind in India. Growing their own organic cotton, they work with local handloom weavers and traditional artisans from across the country to create world class textiles for local and international customers, controlling the process “from seed to sari”. Rejoining our coach we drive back through the mountains to Kerala, stopping en route for lunch. Our destination is the beautiful former hill station of Munnar, and the drive takes us through some of the most spectacular scenery of the tour, surrounded by lush green forest and tea plantations. After checking into our hotel, the Windermere Tea Estate, we meet for a relaxed stroll around the grounds and explanation of the tea production process. The evening is at leisure. Overnight Munnar (B, L)

### **Saturday 18 January In Munnar**

Today we visit Aranya Naturals, established in Munnar in the early 1990s and dedicated to the creation of textiles through eco-friendly dye techniques and to the provision of local employment, particularly for those from the differently abled community in the region. With dyes made using products as diverse as indigo, pomegranate shells, tea leaves, eucalyptus leaves, mulberry leaves, lemongrass, turmeric and marigold flowers, Aranya's artisans create beautiful textiles with decorative techniques such as wax-resist block printing, clamp and tie dyeing. Many are further embellished with shibori or traditional Indian textile craft techniques. In our workshop today we'll have the opportunity to try some of the techniques used by Aranya's artisans. In the later afternoon there is time to explore the Munnar bazaar where you can find local products such as tea, spices, chocolate, aromatic oils and handicrafts. Dinner tonight is in our hotel. Overnight Munnar (B, D)

### **Sunday 19 January Munnar to Kochi**

An early departure after breakfast today for the drive to Alleppy, on the Laccadive Sea. This region was made famous as the setting for Arundhati Roy's classic novel *The God of Small Things* and is renowned for its network of rivers and canals, palm-fringed lakes and lush paddy fields. We enjoy lunch in Alleppy before embarking on our afternoon cruise along these picturesque backwaters, with the chance to spot

## HOTELS

Hotels are subject to change depending on the final number of group participants. The hotels used will be of a similar standard to those listed below, we will inform you of any changes prior to the departure. All hotels are a comfortable 4 and 5-star standard.

### **Chennai, Trident Hotel**

(1 night)

### **Pondicherry, Radisson Resort Pondicherry Bay**

(2 nights)

### **Chennai, Taj Coromandel Hotel**

(2 nights)

### **Mysuru, Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel**

(2 nights)

### **Kannur, Niraamaya Retreats Vaidekam Kannur**

(3 nights)

### **Calicut, The Raviz Kadavu**

(2 nights)

### **Pollachi, Coco Lagoon**

(2 nights)

### **Munnar, Windermere Estate**

(2 nights)

### **Kochi, The Malabar House**

(2 nights)

## WEATHER

The mild winter months in Southern India is the best time to visit, avoiding the worst of the heat and the rain. Daytime temperatures in Chennai and Kochi range from 22-30°C, while in the hills area it will be a bit cooler, around 25°C. Best to pack some layers.

## FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

### **Grade Two**

This tour is designed for people who lead active lives. Please see our website for full details.



some of the abundant birdlife of the region. Rejoining our coach, we continue to our boutique hotel in Kochi where the later afternoon and evening are at leisure. Overnight Kochi (B, L)

### **Monday 20 January Kochi**

This morning we take the ferry from Fort Kochi to nearby Vypin Island, once home to the weavers of the Cochin royal household. Parukutty Nethyarr Amma, the formidable consort of the Maharaja Rama Varma XVI in the early 20th century, was a committed nationalist who encouraged the weaving of the simple, hand spun khadi cloth favoured by Gandhi, who visited Kerala in 1925, and it is this style of cloth which is still woven in the region today. We continue by bus to a khadi weaving centre where we see spinners and weavers at work using traditional handlooms. After time for lunch, we return to Fort Kochi for a tour of this fascinating neighbourhood with its mixed Portuguese, Dutch and British heritage. There is time to relax later this afternoon before we meet for our special farewell dinner and a Kathakali dance performance. Overnight Kochi (B, L, D)

### **Tuesday 21 January Departure**

After a late checkout this morning, there will be a transfer to Cochin International Airport for your homeward flight. A day use room will be available an airport hotel if required. Please refer to individual documents for onward travel plans. (B)



## ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Lucy Yeates** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

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