

# KERALA

GOD'S OWN COUNTRY



## ITINERARY:

12 Days/11 Nights 'All Inclusive'  
Trip starts & ends at Kochi Airport (Cochin)

### Day 1

AM You will be met on arrival at Kochi International Airport and transferred (1.5hr) to Mararikulam for 2 nights at the lovely Marari Beach Resort on the Malabar Coast.

PM The resort is set in 30 acres of coconut groves, lily ponds, fruit trees and a large organic farm, on the Arabian Sea. Free afternoon to relax and perhaps dispel jet-lag with a full body massage at the resort's excellent Spa or with a swim in the pool or the sea.

### Day 2

Morning and afternoon activities including a village walk watching fishermen land their catch (Our resort sponsors the local fishing community and gets first pick) and a naturalist-led walk to spot some of the resort's 97 species of butterflies, more than 350 species of endemic plants, 3 varieties of turtles, and

even 10 kinds of frogs. As for the birds, there are too many to even name.

### Day 3

AM Very scenic morning drive (4hr) climbing 1,500m into the Western Ghats for a **2 nights** stay at the wonderful Windmere Estate, Munnar, a plantation dating from colonial times.

PM 2hr plantation trek in late afternoon to learn about cardamom and coffee growing. Wonderful mountain views are all around.

### Day 4

Morning and afternoon walks through forest and tea gardens, spotting for bird life, and experiencing the lovely countryside surrounding the estate.



### Day 5

AM Drive (4hr) along the ridge tops of the Western Ghats, through lush forest and plantations on one of the State's most scenic routes, to Thekkady's renowned Spice Village (**3 nights**). The resort was a colonial spice garden and accommodation is in very comfortable thatched cottages strewn about the grounds. It has a renowned Ayurvedic spa and offers excellent local cuisine, the daily cooking demonstrations are very popular. Spice Village is located on the boundary of Periyar National Park. Also known as Periyar Tiger Reserve this 305 sq Km wildlife sanctuary was established in 1935 and is home to tigers (40 at last census but very elusive) and a significant elephant population, as well as rare primates such as lion-tailed macaques and nilgiri langurs, leopards, Indian wild dogs, and Indian bison.

PM Late afternoon spice plantation and organic vegetable gardens visit accompanied by the resident botanist.

### Day 6

AM Rangers-accompanied morning walk (3hr) in Periyar National Park. The park has an artificial lake at its centre and a hugely varied range of habitats from dry grasslands to riverine forest. Apart from its large mammals Periyar is renowned for over 320 species of birds, some extremely rare. This National Park is one of the few in India where access on foot is allowed and mornings are not only cooler but also the best time to catch a glimpse of the wildlife.

PM Afternoon visit to the Connemara Tea Estate to watch the surprisingly complex processing of CTC (Gunpowder) tea and stroll through the terraces.

### Day 7

AM Rangers-accompanied morning walk (3hr) in Periyar National Park. We make the most of the cooler temperatures and foot access to the park by exploring a different area.

Afternoon at leisure to enjoy the resort's facilities or to explore independently.

### Day 8

AM Scenic drive (4hr) down to the coastal plain and the port town of Alappuzha (Alleppey).

PM We start our private cruise along the UNESCO designated 'Backwaters'. **2 nights** accommodation in comfortable 2 or 3 bedroom (en-suite) converted 'rice boats', fully equipped with electricity, running water, and each boat has its own excellent cook and staff.

### Day 9

We specifically contract boats that allow us to escape the crowds and cruise along the more inaccessible and tranquil waterways where daily rural life unfolds before your eyes. We shall stop where possible to visit sights and moor together for lunch and sundowner drinks hosted by Anthony, giving us a chance to socialise and catch up.

### Day 10

AM After 1hr morning cruise, we drive (1½hr) to Fort Cochin and check-in at the famous Brunton Boatyard (**2 nights**), the best boutique hotel in town.

PM Afternoon stroll along the Portuguese and Dutch ramparts of colonial Fort Cochin, visit Vasco da Gama's burial site in the oldest Catholic church in India, watch the Chinese fishing nets being operated and the late afternoon fish auction as the catch is landed on the beach.

### Day 11

AM Visit of Mattancherry and Jew Town with its beautifully frescoed Royal Palace, narrow lanes, boutique shops, and spice warehouses. Lunch back at our hotel.

PM At Leisure. Chance to relax, shop, enjoy spa treatments or to further explore Fort Cochin.

### Day 12

Transfer to the Kochi International Airport for flight back home.