

Gentle Walking & Wildlife Kerala, India *New*

Uncover tropical Kerala's must-see sights on scenic walks through ancient temples, tea plantations and wildlife sanctuaries, plus a traditional backwaters cruise.



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Walking
Accommodation	Hotels, Eco Camp, Riceboat
Grade	Gentle / Moderate
Duration	14 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	Walks on: 6 days
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Local Guides, Kerala
Land only	Joining in Cochin, India
Max altitude	2,637m/8,652ft, Meesapulimala Peak, Day 8

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



tel: +44 (0)1453 844400 fax: +44 (0)1453 844422 info@mountainkingdoms.com www.mountainkingdoms.com

Departures

Group departures

2024 Dates:

Sat 24 Feb - Sat 09 Mar

Sat 30 Nov - Sat 14 Dec

2025 Dates:

Sat 25 Jan - Sat 08 Feb

Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 4 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

Your guide



For this holiday in Kerala you will have specialist local guides at all places in the itinerary where sightseeing is indicated. You will also have an experienced driver with you throughout.

Your trip highlights

- Take a sunset cruise to see Kochi's iconic fishing nets silhouetted against the water
- Walk with expert local trackers in three different wildlife sanctuaries - Periyar, Chinnar and Salim Ali
- Wander through tea plantations in the rolling hills of Munnar with great views of the Western Ghats
- Ascend the second highest peak in southern India, Meesapulimala Peak, 2,637m
- Relax on an overnight riceboat cruise on Kerala's languid coconut-fringed backwaters
- Visit a spice plantation, tea factory and coconut farm, and experience everyday rural Kerala life

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-3	Arrive Cochin. Sunset harbour cruise, walking tour of the old quarter and time at leisure.
Days 4-5	Drive to Thattekad and visit potters village. Bird sanctuary walks and plantation tour. Optional kayaking/rafting activities (included) on Edmalayar River.
Days 6-8	Drive up to Munnar. Explore on foot and visit market, tea museum. Walk up Meesapulimala, 2,637m, the second highest peak in southern India.
Day 9-10	Drive to Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary for a plantation tour and wildlife tracking in the sanctuary with expert local trackers.
Day 11	Drive to Madurai. Heritage walk and visit to Meenaksi Temple.
Day 12	Drive to Periyar. Afternoon jungle walking safari with wildlife trackers.
Day 13	Transfer to Alleppey for overnight backwaters cruise on a converted riceboat
Days 14-15	At leisure in boutique lakeside hotel. Transfer to airport for flight home.

Trip summary

Kerala is a perfect winter destination with a temperate climate and understated natural beauty. It is a land of tea plantations, verdant inland hills rising to 2,500m, wild jungle reserves and enticing waterways. On our Kerala walking holiday you will explore the region's must-see scenic, cultural and natural highlights from the water and on foot, and experience Southern India's distinctive culture and delicious cuisine.

Your holiday starts in Kochi where you explore this wonderfully atmospheric town and take a sunset cruise to see the photogenic Chinese fishing nets for which the town is famed. Next, you head east to the tranquil Birds Mumar Camp on the banks of the Edmalayar River and explore Thattekad Bird Sanctuary with the expert resident naturalists.

Continuing on to the old hill station of Munnar, with its surprisingly dramatic mountain scenery, you will walk on trails through tea estates with spectacular views of the Western Ghats and up Meesapulimala, 2,637m, the second highest peak in southern India. You then cross over to the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu visiting the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary known for its unique dry deciduous forest and its indigenous tribal population who still dwell in the forest. The sanctuary is also home to the endangered Great Grey Grizzled Squirrel.

Travelling on via Tamil Nadu's agricultural landscape, colourful markets, rural villages and the dazzling Meenakshi Dravidian temple complex in Madurai, you reach the dense forests of the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary and the Cardamom Hills. The park which forms the major watershed of two important rivers of Kerala, the Periyar and Pamba, is home to around 40 tigers which you will search for on foot. Whilst tiger sightings are uncommon, as one of the oldest reserves in India, Periyar is home to a wealth of flora and fauna including Indian elephant, Indian wild dog, Guar, Sambhar, the rare Nilgiri Tahr and hundreds of different bird species so there is plenty to see. You will be accompanied by an armed guard on your walking safari.

From Periyar you drive to Alleppey and board a rice boat for an overnight cruise on Kerala's tranquil palm-fringed backwaters, a series of incredibly scenic lakes, canals and lagoons where you can sit back and watch the local people go about their daily life. Your holiday concludes on the picturesque shores of Lake Vembanad where you can explore the lakeside or just relax and enjoy the pool and spa facilities in your beautiful boutique hotel.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: In flight

Today you depart on your overnight flight to southern India.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive Kochi. Group transfer to hotel - 1½ hours. Sunset cruise.

You will arrive in Kochi in the early morning and transfer to Kochi town where you will check into your hotel. After time to rest from your long flight you will have the afternoon at leisure to venture out for a first look at the town.

Later, in the evening you walk down to the boat jetty to take a sunset cruise round the harbour. The cruise will take a couple of hours approximately and you will see the islands of Kochi, various activities in the harbour and will end your cruise at sunset at the Chinese fishing nets. The city of Kochi is actually made up of a collection of islands and headlands. Between the peninsula on which Fort Kochi and Mattancherry are located and the mainland of Ernakulam, lies Willingdon Island. Offshore islands include Bolgatty, Vallarpadam and Vypeen. Your cruise will take you past these islands and you will see arrays of Chinese fishing nets. Each of these structures is at least 10m high and comprises a cantilever with an outstretched net suspended over the sea and large stones suspended from ropes as counterweights at the other end. Each installation is operated by a team of up to six fishermen. This style of net is thought to have been introduced by traders from the court of Chinese emperor, Kublai Khan.



Overnight: Secret Garden Hotel or Similar, Cochin (Meals: D)

Day 3: Morning walking tour of Kochi. Afternoon at leisure.

Kochi is a fascinating place. In 1102 Kochi became the seat of the Kingdom of Kochi and has been a prominent city since then. With the advent of the Portuguese in 1503, it became the first European Colonial settlement in India and it remained the capital of Portuguese India until 1530. It was then invaded by the Dutch and the British and became the first princely state to join the Indian Union post independence in 1947. The various people who have lived there have all left their mark on the city: the Jews (700BC onwards), the Portuguese (1503-1660), the Dutch (1660-1814) and the British (1814-1947). In 1920 Robert Bristow the harbour engineer, under the direction of Lord Willington, transformed this historic spice port over the next 21 years into the safest harbour on the peninsula.

In the morning, led by an English speaking guide, you will explore the sights of Fort Kochi and Mattancherry. Among the places you will see is the St. Francis Church, the oldest European church in India, built by the Portuguese in 1516, famous for housing the remains of Vasco Da Gama, the great Portuguese explorer who first came to Calicut, Kerala in 1498 and died during his third visit in 1524 in Kochi. His remains were later exhumed and taken to Lisbon in 1539.

You might also visit the Dutch Palace: built in 1557, the Mattancherry Palace was a gift from the Portuguese to Raja Veera Kerala Varma but after its renovation by the Dutch in 1663 it became popularly known as the Dutch Palace. The palace is mostly built in traditional Keralan style - Nalukett - with a central courtyard and has a medieval charm. Located nearby in Jew Town is Paradesi Synagogue, one of very few still functioning here although unlike normal synagogues it does not have a Rabbi but is led by the elders of the community. Paradesi was built by European and Middle Eastern Jews in 1568. The area between the synagogue and the Dutch Palace used to be the spice town where most of the spices were traded, and until fairly recently there was even an old fashioned Pepper Exchange where pepper was traded. The old spice shops are sadly all gone, but it is still interesting to browse around these narrow lanes which are nowadays dotted with antique shops.

The remainder of the day is free for your own exploration.

Overnight: Secret Garden Hotel or Similar, Cochin (Meals: B)

Day 4: Drive to Thattekad, visit potters village en-route. 2-3 hours' drive. Village walks and plantation tour.

Today you leave the hustle and bustle of Cochin and travel to the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary. En-route you will stop to visit a potter's village where pots and other earthenware items are still made using traditional techniques, keeping an ancient way of life alive. Birds Murre Camp, located on the banks of the Edamalayar River and overlooking the Edamalayar Forest is an ideal spot to explore the area from. The region is known for its plantations of rubber, nutmeg and other spices. This afternoon you will visit a spice plantation near the camp and explore the local village on foot to see the local way of life.

Overnight: Birds Murre Camp, Thattekad (Meals: BLD)

Day 5: Explore Bird Sanctuary on guided walk with local trackers 8-10 km, 4-5 hours. Evening - optional kayak/raft on river.

Although compact, Thattekad Bird Sanctuary, which was founded by renowned ornithologist Dr Salim Ali, is incredibly species rich - over 270 species can be found in the mix of tropical and deciduous forest. This morning you will explore the sanctuary on foot with local guides looking out for special and endemic bird species such as the Sri Lanka frogmouth, the Malabar trogon, the Wayanad laughing thrush, the grey-headed fish eagle and the crimson-throated barbet, in addition to flying squirrels and gliding lizards.



Refreshments will be provided on the walk and you return to the camp for lunch by the riverside. Please note, during the dry season if the forest department decides that there is risk of fire then the sanctuary will be closed and we will not be able to do the long walk. If this happens then we will walk in another part of the sanctuary, a slightly shorter walk but equally interesting.

In the evening there is the option to kayak on Edamalayar River with a guide to help you explore the inlets and canals in the forest. The kayaking is included in the price of the holiday.

Overnight: Birds Murre Camp, Thattekad (Meals: BLD)

Day 6: Drive to Munnar. Visit market and tea museum.

This morning you drive up into the hills through the spice plantations to reach the tea estates of Munnar. Munnar was originally inhabited by indigenous tribes before the British planters discovered its potential for growing tea. Vast tracts of forests were cleared, and labour bought up the hills from Tamil Nadu to start the plantations. While tea is still grown it is not as lucrative as used to be and now visitors come to Munnar for its cooler climate, lush green landscape, wildlife parks and the high peaks.

In the afternoon you will visit the market where the people in the estates go for their daily shopping. Its colourful display and the fresh produce on sale make it an interesting visit. You will also visit the Tea Museum which offers an insight into the history of tea in Munnar and has an exhibition of the equipment used by the planters.

Overnight: Tea County Resort or Similar, Munnar (Meals: B L)

Day 7: Walk to Top Station, 2,150m/7,054ft, from Yellapetty Village - 10km, 5-6 hours.

This morning you will be driven for an hour to the tea estates at Yellapetty from where you start today's walk. Your guide will lead you through rolling green tea fields and wildlife-rich shola forest and grasslands, traversing through undulating countryside with spectacular views of the Western Ghats. You complete the walk at Top Station, 2,150m/7,054ft, an old colonial-era tea trading post and once one of the highest railway stations in Kerala, where your transport will be waiting to transfer you back to Munnar. The scenic return drive takes around an hour and a half winding down through the hills.

Overnight: Tea County Resort or Similar, Munnar (Meals: B L)

Day 8: Walk up Meesapulimala Peak 2,637m/8,652ft from Rhodo Valley, 2,400m/7,874ft - 8km, 5-6 hours.

Today is the literal high point of your holiday - an ascent of the second highest peak in southern India. An early morning jeep transfer of around an hour brings you to the roadhead at Rhodo Mansion from where you ascend on a well-trodden path through grassland to the summit. There are some steeper sections but these can be minimised by taking more circuitous alternative paths. At 2,637m/8,652ft above sea level Meesapulimala is the second highest peak in Southern India and the only one that is open to visitors. The upper reaches are mainly grassland and offer stunning views of the Western Ghats and of the hills of both Tamil Nadu and Kerala as Meesapulimala sits on the border of the two southern states. The walk up Meesapulimala is perhaps the best trek experience that you can do in southern India. After taking in the views - cloud permitting - you return to either Rhodo Mansion, or to Meesapulimala Base Camp where your vehicle will be waiting to drive you back to your hotel.

As this is the most demanding walk of the holiday you might prefer not to ascend Meesapulimala but instead spend the day at leisure or further exploring Munnar.

Overnight: Tea County Resort or Similar, Munnar (Meals: B L)

Day 9: Drive to Manupetti. Afternoon village visit and plantation tour. Walking 2-3 hours.

Leaving Munnar's misty hills behind you drive down through the sprawling tea plantations to the Sandalwood forests of Marayur and the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary. Your base for the next couple of nights is the beautiful Chinnar Eco Living, a unique six room property well off the tourist trail which is also an organic farm growing a variety of fruits and vegetables. You may wish to spend the afternoon relaxing beside your private plunge pool, but otherwise an exploration of the local village will offer an insight into rural Tamil village life, and afterwards you visit a coconut farm, coir making unit and a local temple before walking back to the hotel.

Overnight: Spice Tree Chinnar Eco Living (Meals: B D)

Day 10: Wildlife walk with local trackers in Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary - 4-5 hours.

After an early breakfast you drive to nearby Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary. Chinnar is a protected area providing sanctuary for the critically endangered grizzled giant squirrel, the world's smallest wild cat - the rusty-spotted cat, Asiatic elephants, sambhar deer, dhole and Indian gaur amongst other species. A number of traditional medicinal plants are found in the forest, mainly along the river, and lizards, butterflies, and dragonflies can be seen in abundance.

Chinnar Sanctuary lies in the rainshadow of the Western Ghats and offers a different type of walking terrain with its mainly dry deciduous forest of thorny bushes. It is also home to two indigenous tribes who have their own distinct culture and way of life. On your walk you will be accompanied by a couple of trackers from these tribes who know the forest inside out.



Overnight: Spice Tree Chinnar Eco Living (Meals: B D)

Day 11: Drive to Madurai (4 hours). Heritage walk & temple visit - 2-3 hours.

Today you drive across the rich cultivated plains of Tamil Nadu to the temple town of Madurai. After settling into your hotel, with maybe time for a quick dip in the pool, you head out in the afternoon to explore the city on a heritage walking tour.

The vibrant city of Madurai is the cultural capital of Tamil Nadu, and has a skyline dominated by Dravidian temples and soaring gateway towers. On your walk you will visit colourful markets selling local produce, textile shops and teashops, passing through narrow streets lined with historic buildings. The walk culminates at the famous Meenakshi temple complex. Meenakshi is an iconic Hindu temple renowned for its stunning Dravidian-style architecture. Dedicated to Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar, it features intricate sculptures, 50 meter high gopurams (towers) adorned with brightly coloured figures, and a sacred tank.

Overnight: Heritage Hotel or Similar, Madurai (Meals: B)

Day 12: Drive to Periyar. Afternoon wildlife walk with local trackers - 5km, 2-3 hours.

The Cardamom Hills are your destination today as you leave the busy city behind, crossing the fertile plains of the Cumbum Valley towards Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary. Your accommodation is in Kumily, close to the park entrance and well located for a stroll into town, should you wish to explore.

This afternoon you will take a jungle walk in the park with knowledgeable local trackers and escorted by an armed guard from the forestry department.

Scenic Periyar is the former hunting grounds of the Travancore royal family, and the man-made lake at its heart, once a feature enjoyed by 19th century nobles, is now a magnet for wildlife. The lake reserve was declared a protected area in 1950 and later, given its importance for conservation, was given national park status in 1978. The park has a healthy number of tiger (though sightings are extremely rare) and a sizable population of elephants amongst other species of birds and animals.



Periyar National Park has pioneered a number of eco-development projects and your guided walk through the sanctuary is one such project, initiated by the forest department.

Overnight: Wildernest Guesthouse or Similar, Periyar (Meals: BLD)

Day 13: Transfer to Alleppey for overnight backwaters cruise.

Driving west you leave the hills for the final time and head down towards the coastal plains, arriving in Alleppey late morning.

Amongst the lagoons, canals and rivers live whole communities for whom the waterways are effectively the equivalent of a road system. The area around the backwaters is one of the few places in the world where cultivation happens below sea level. Fishing remains probably the most important activity, but villagers also gain a livelihood through the cultivation of crops including rice and cashew nuts and the production of coir. The rough fibrous coating of coconuts, coir is used to make brushes, sacks, matting and even rope. The traditional name for the rice barge on which you will travel is the 'Kettuvallam,' which literally translated means 'boat with knots'. Coir rope was typically used to bind together the wooden structure with knots in the rope serving the purpose of nails.

At midday you board your rice boat and enjoy a relaxing afternoon cruise through the waterways, offering an opportunity to observe rural Kerala up close. For the people living on the banks, the backwaters are a part of their day to day life. You stop to look at paddy cultivation, watch local fishing, and see historic churches and local temples. During the evening, you can generally see the people of the community meeting and relaxing by the backwaters. Your houseboat anchors for the night at around 5.30pm.

Overnight: Backwaters Riceboat (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: Morning disembark in Kumarakom. Remainder of day at leisure.

After breakfast you disembark at Kumarakom on Lake Vembanad. This beautiful lake is one of the largest and most scenic in India and your hotel is positioned right on the lake shore. The rest of the day will be at leisure for you to enjoy the hotel facilities and explore Lake Vembanad.

Overnight: Rhythm Resort or Similar, Kumarakom (Meals: B D)

Day 15: Group transfer to the airport - 83km, 2-3 hours. Fly to London.

After an early breakfast you will transfer to Kochi airport for your return flight to London. **(Meals: B)**

Our grading system

Gentle Walking & Wildlife Kerala is graded as a Gentle/Moderate walking holiday, as described below.

Gentle

Trips within this grade typically mix sightseeing with easy-paced half and/or full day walks. On these trips, walks will be on relatively low altitude trails, for a duration of around 4-6 hours. On all of our Gentle graded trips, some ascent and descent should be anticipated, and there may occasionally be a longer walking day. Holidays within this grade generally use hotels and comfortable lodges although a few do have some nights camping.

These holidays are suitable for people who enjoy easy-paced walks in the British countryside or exploring on foot rather than in a vehicle.

Moderate

Holidays in this grade typically involve 5 to 10 days of walking or trekking. They will often venture into more remote country and can cross mountain passes. Altitudes though are still relatively low, going no higher than around 4,300m/14,000ft. Accommodation can include simple hotels, tea houses, lodges and camping.

Trip altitude

Important - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend www.medex.org.uk as a good source of information.

The nature of adventure travel

Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

What the price includes

Mountain Kingdoms aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

What's included:

- ✓ An English-speaking local leader
- ✓ Good hotel, eco-camp and guesthouse accommodation on a twin share basis
- ✓ Meals as specified in the itinerary: 13 breakfasts, 7 lunches and 8 dinners
- ✓ Overnight backwaters cruise
- ✓ Kayaking at Thattekad
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicle/s
- ✓ Sightseeing, entrance fees and walks as specified in the itinerary
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Single, timed, group airport transfers on arrival and departure
- ✓ Carbon offset for clients taking our flight-inclusive option
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle or a free Mountain Kingdoms fleece
- ✓ Opportunity to join one of our pre-trip meets in the Cotswolds

Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

What's not included:

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Visa fees
- ✗ Airport departure taxes, excepting UK Departure Tax
- ✗ Some meals - as detailed in the itinerary
- ✗ Tips

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit [For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>](https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign).

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



Secret Garden Hotel or Similar, Cochin

The Secret Garden is a small, 3-star heritage hotel only a 5 minute walk from the centre of Fort Cochin. A haven of calm and tranquillity the hotel has a pool set in a pretty garden alongside a shady veranda where breakfast is served. There are even daily yoga sessions for some added zen. Guestrooms are all individually furnished with four poster beds, air-conditioning, ceiling fans, mini fridges, tea making facilities and free Wi-Fi.



Birds Murmur Camp, Thattekad

Located on the banks of the Edamalayar River and overlooking the Edamalayar forest, Birds Murmur Camp offers accommodation in eight air-conditioned glamping tents each with private ensuite facilities and a sit-out desk overlooking the river and forest. Village walks, kayaking and rafting are available right from the property and it is fabulous spot for birding.



Tea County Resort or Similar, Munnar

The Tea County resort enjoys good views from its position amidst the rolling hills and forests of Munnar. The hotel offers a bar, multi-cuisine restaurant and attractive gardens. Comfy rooms come complete with fans, minibars and tea/coffee making facilities. Wi-Fi is available in public areas.



Spice Tree Chinnar Eco Living

Spice Tree Chinnar Eco Living is an eco-friendly initiative, with buildings constructed from rammed earth sourced on site and with thatched roofs made from local palmyra palm wood and palm leaves. There are just six villa, each with its own plunge pool and living area. Chinnar Eco Living is set within an organic fruit and veg farm. The tranquillity and views of the surrounding hills make it a special place indeed.



Heritage Hotel or Similar, Madurai

Heritage Hotel was originally built as a British club for the managers of the cotton mills, before being remodelled in the 1050s by renowned architect Geoffery Bawa. It exudes charm and provides a blend of modern amenities and historic elegance. The pool, built like a temple tank, is one of the best in southern India. Accommodation is in tastefully appointed villas and cottages, and in addition to the pool, facilities include extensive landscaped grounds, a health club and spa, a choice of dining options and a bar.



Wilderness Guesthouse or Similar, Periyar

Attractive Wilderness Guesthouse is built of granite with landscaped courtyard gardens. There are ten generous-sized rooms each with either a private garden or a terrace. It is ideally located to walk into town should you wish to explore more. Their camll cafe offers breakfast plus tea, coffee and cakes.



Backwaters Riceboat

Riceboats generally have one, two or three bedrooms each with en-suite facilities and exterior space to sit and relax. Bedrooms are air-conditioned although this is only usually switched on during the night (9pm to 5am.) Larger boats can be found but due to their size the routes they follow can be quite limited. Depending upon the group size, we will therefore arrange to use two, three or four smaller boats which are better able to navigate the narrower canals. Each riceboat has a driver and a cook, who will prepare delicious Keralan meals, with fresh ingredients often being purchased along the way.



Rhythm Resort or Similar, Kumarakom

The lovely Rythym Resort is laid-out around a long central swimming-pool and is located on the shores of scenic Lake Vembanad. Bright, airy rooms have either a terrace or balcony and views of either the lake or the pool. There is a large infinity pool, small gym and indoor games area. The resort also offers Ayurvedic spa treatments.

Meal arrangements

13 x breakfasts, 7 x lunches and 8 x dinners

Flight arrangements

Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

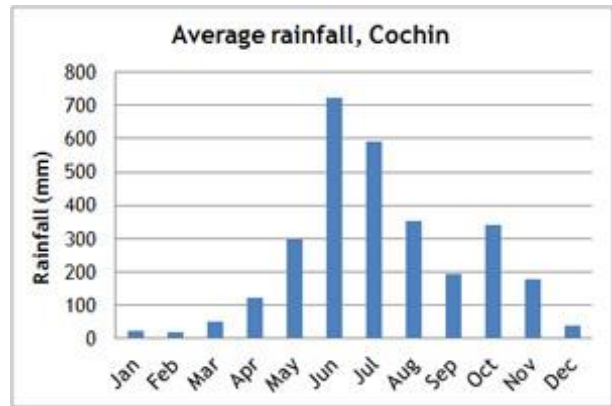
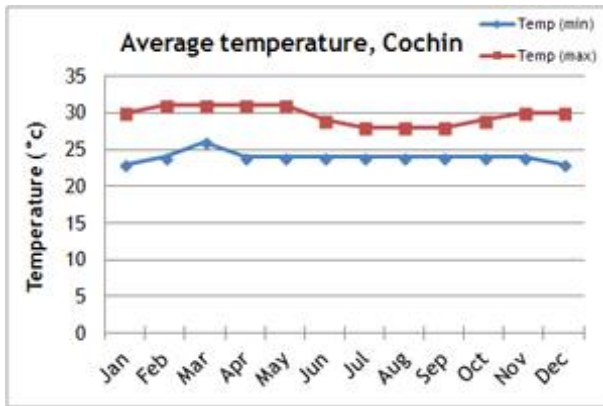
Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

Further information

When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

Climate information



Extensions

Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at www.mountainkingdoms.com.



There are many ways you can extend your holiday with Mountain Kingdoms: we can book extra hotel nights at the start or end of your trip for you, arrange a tropical beach extension in Kerala or fly you to any other Indian city for further exploration. In fact, whatever's available we can help make it happen. We're happy to suggest ideas, provide quotes and make all the arrangements.

We can also assist with flight and hotel upgrades.



Agra, Taj Mahal & Jaipur from Delhi

We offer various extensions to Agra, from a one-day visit to see the majestic Taj Mahal to a six-day trip to visit both the Taj and the Amber Fort at Jaipur. All options travel to Agra from Delhi on the Shatabdi Express and include the services of an English speaking guide, sightseeing and private transport.

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- This itinerary has been carefully designed to blend visits to must-see highlights with on-foot exploration.
- The holiday includes walks in three of southern India's wildlife sanctuaries, led by local guides to offer a unique insight into the region's flora and fauna.
- Accommodation has been chosen to offer a variety of experiences from a comfortable safari-style camp to a traditional rice boat and a beautiful heritage hotel.
- Steve, Seraphina, Linda and April, from the Mountain Kingdoms team, have all visited southern India and would be happy to answer any questions you may have about travelling there.
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and additional activities.
- We have our own in-house Flights Manager and can offer flexible flight options. If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights Manager, April, for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: www.mountainkingdoms.com or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

Truly independent

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

Complete financial security

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

No Surcharge Guarantee

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

Award winning Responsible Tourism

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Genuine small group travel

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

Loyalty Discount

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit www.tourismdeclares.com

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

Carbon Offsetting

Already doing:

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

Will do:

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Already doing:

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

Will do:

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.

