



The Shore Temple, Mamallapuram

HAND-CRAFTED AROUND YOU

South India: Temples, Tea & Backwaters

Tamil Nadu's living heritage and the green landscapes of Kerala

21 DAYS / 20 NIGHTS

Recommended travel window

January-February 2027; early March as an alternative

Private dates and personalised quotation on request.

A JOURNEY WITH TIME TO ENJOY IT

The experience

Travel from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea through two regions with very different personalities. Tamil Nadu offers sculpted temples, active pilgrimage towns, artists and the grand houses of Chettinad. Across the Western Ghats, Kerala brings spice gardens, tea-covered hills, forest waterways and peaceful backwater villages. Twenty-one days give the route room to breathe, with two-night stays in most places and time to understand what you are seeing. Private guides connect history with daily life, while well-chosen hotels and a leisurely daytime backwater cruise keep the journey comfortable throughout.

What makes this journey special

- Chennai's neighbourhoods and coastal Mamallapuram
- Puducherry's French and Tamil quarters
- The Chola temples of Darasuram and Thanjavur
- Chettinad mansions and Madurai's living traditions
- Periyar's forest setting and Munnar's tea landscapes
- A private backwater cruise and historic Fort Kochi

Best time to travel. January-February is the best combined window for this coast-to-coast route, with generally comfortable sightseeing and favourable conditions in Kerala's hills and backwaters.

Designed for. Culture lovers, couples, families and travellers seeking a varied longer journey

Pace and activity. Easy to moderate; temple walking, short nature walks and several transfer days.

Your private start date is chosen within the recommended season. The exact hotel list, room categories and final package are provided in your personal quotation.

THE JOURNEY AT A GLANCE

21 days, thoughtfully arranged

DAY	EXPERIENCE	OVERNIGHT
01	Arrive in Chennai	Chennai
02	Chennai through its neighbourhoods	Chennai
03	Chennai to Mamallapuram	Mamallapuram
04	Coastal temples and stone carvers	Mamallapuram
05	Along the coast to Puducherry	Puducherry
06	Puducherry: two sides of the town	Puducherry
07	The Chola country around Kumbakonam	Kumbakonam
08	Darasuram to Thanjavur	Thanjavur
09	Thanjavur: the great temple and its arts	Thanjavur
10	Into Chettinad	Chettinad
11	Chettinad: houses, tiles and village life	Chettinad
12	Chettinad to Madurai	Madurai
13	Madurai: a living temple city	Madurai
14	Across the hills to Thekkady	Thekkady
15	The forest setting of Periyar	Thekkady
16	Tea country: Thekkady to Munnar	Munnar
17	Munnar at a gentle pace	Munnar
18	From the hills to Kumarakom	Kumarakom
19	A day on the backwaters	Kumarakom
20	Kumarakom to historic Kochi	Kochi
21	Depart Kochi	Journey ends

Road distances and travel times in the programme are approximate, excluding major visits. Flight and rail timings are confirmed for your selected dates.



Days 01-02 | Kapaleeshwarar Temple, Chennai

DAY 01

Arrive in Chennai

Meet your representative at Chennai airport and transfer to your hotel. The first day is kept free of demanding visits so you can recover from the flight. An early arrival allows a short orientation near the coast or a gentle neighbourhood walk. Over dinner, your guide introduces the route across Tamil Nadu and Kerala, explaining the changing landscapes and traditions you will encounter. Discuss any particular interests in architecture, textiles, nature or family activities.

Travel: Private airport transfer; approximately 45-90 minutes.

Meals: Dinner | **Overnight:** Chennai

DAY 02

Chennai through its neighbourhoods

Explore Mylapore and the streets around Kapaleeshwarar Temple, learning about the role of a temple neighbourhood in city life. Continue to selected historic areas such as Fort St George or San Thome, according to opening arrangements. Your guide connects these different places through Chennai's maritime and cultural history. Leave time for a meeting with an artist or a focused museum visit, with a comfortable break between outings rather than a full day in traffic.

Travel: Private city touring and short guided walks.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Chennai



Days 03-04 | The Shore Temple, Mamallapuram

DAY 03

Chennai to Mamallapuram

Follow the coast south to Mamallapuram, also known as Mahabalipuram. After settling in, begin exploring its remarkable group of rock-cut monuments. The great open-air relief commonly called Arjuna's Penance and the nearby cave temples provide an introduction to Pallava art and storytelling. A guide helps identify the figures without overwhelming the visit with dates and names. Stay near the coast for two nights, allowing time to appreciate the monuments and the town's living stone-carving tradition.

Travel: Approximately 60-70 km; 1.5-2 hours driving.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Mamallapuram

DAY 04

Coastal temples and stone carvers

Visit the Shore Temple and the Five Rathas, looking at the different ways builders worked with stone and architectural form. The seaside setting gives the monuments a character unlike the inland temples that follow. Later, meet a sculptor in a working studio to see how contemporary makers continue to shape the same material. The afternoon is free for a coastal walk or time at your hotel, with the day's visits arranged around comfortable temperatures and good light.

Travel: Local touring on foot and by private vehicle.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Mamallapuram



Days 05-06 | The French quarter of Puducherry

DAY 05

Along the coast to Puducherry

Continue south to Puducherry and settle into your hotel before a guided walk through the former French quarter. Look at the houses, courtyards and street plan, then follow the change in character as you approach the Tamil neighbourhoods. Your guide explains the town's colonial connections alongside its continuing Indian identity. A promenade walk provides a gentle end to the day, with time to enjoy the atmosphere rather than moving directly into another long sightseeing programme.

Travel: Approximately 100 km; 2.5-3 hours driving.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Puducherry

DAY 06

Puducherry: two sides of the town

Explore the Tamil quarter, its markets and traditional houses, then visit selected cultural spaces that reveal a more personal side of Puducherry. A visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram's public areas can introduce the town's spiritual history when visitor access permits. Auroville's visitor centre can be included for those interested in its community ideas; access to the Matrimandir interior is not assumed. Keep the later part of the day free for independent exploration or a quiet afternoon.

Travel: Guided neighbourhood walks and local visits.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Puducherry



Days 07-08 | Airavatesvara Temple, Darasuram

DAY 07

The Chola country around Kumbakonam

Travel inland towards Kumbakonam, stopping at Gangaikonda Cholapuram to explore its great temple and understand the ambition of the Chola rulers. The route passes through a working agricultural landscape, helping place the monuments in context. Reach Kumbakonam and settle in before a light introduction to the town. The programme separates this transfer from tomorrow's Darasuram visit so the temples can be appreciated individually, with time to notice their differences.

Travel: Approximately 140-170 km; 4-5 hours driving, plus visits.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Kumbakonam

DAY 08

Darasuram to Thanjavur

Explore Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram, where smaller-scale details and sculpted surfaces reward a close, unhurried visit. Continue to Thanjavur and settle into your hotel before an introduction to the city. Your guide explains its place in the region's political and artistic history, preparing you for tomorrow's main temple visit. A short encounter with a traditional maker can be arranged if time allows, but the afternoon also leaves room to rest.

Travel: Approximately 50-70 km; 1.5-2 hours driving, plus visits.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Thanjavur



Days 09-10 | Brihadeeswarar Temple, Thanjavur

DAY 09

Thanjavur: the great temple and its arts

Visit Brihadeeswarar Temple, taking time to understand its scale, layout and continuing religious role. Your guide explains the building's relationship with Chola power and patronage while allowing you to enjoy its proportions and carved detail. Continue to selected palace museum collections when open, and meet a practitioner of Thanjavur painting or another local art. The day brings together monumental architecture and the patient work of artists who maintain the city's cultural traditions.

Travel: City touring and guided monument visits.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Thanjavur

DAY 10

Into Chettinad

Drive to the Chettinad region and settle into a characterful heritage-style stay. Begin with a guided village walk to see the grand houses built by trading families, noting the materials and decorative influences brought from far beyond Tamil Nadu. Where access is arranged, step into a mansion courtyard to understand the scale of domestic life here. The afternoon remains gentle, allowing the change from a busy temple city to a smaller rural setting to be part of the experience.

Travel: Approximately 100-120 km; 2.5-3.5 hours driving.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Chettinad



Days 11-12 | Carved details from a Chettinad mansion

DAY 11

Chettinad: houses, tiles and village life

Visit selected houses and workshops with permission from their owners. Watch the making of Athangudi tiles, whose colours and patterns are a distinctive part of the region's interiors, and explore the everyday streets around the larger mansions. A hosted introduction to Chettinad cooking can be included as a cultural encounter rather than the focus of the whole day. Return to your heritage stay with time to enjoy its courtyard spaces and the quieter pace of the countryside.

Travel: Local village touring and artisan visits.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Chettinad

DAY 12

Chettinad to Madurai

Travel to Madurai, a city where religious life and commerce remain closely interwoven. Settle in before a guided orientation through streets around the Meenakshi temple complex. Your guide explains the significance of the towering gateways and the rhythms of a living pilgrimage city. The first visit is kept manageable, leaving time tomorrow for the main temple experience and other heritage sites. Enjoy a relaxed evening after the shorter drive.

Travel: Approximately 90-110 km; 2.5-3 hours driving.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Madurai



Days 13-14 | Meenakshi Temple, Madurai

DAY 13

Madurai: a living temple city

Explore the areas of Meenakshi Temple open to visitors, with your guide explaining its architecture, sculpted figures and active traditions. Some sacred inner spaces are reserved for Hindu worshippers; the programme follows the access appropriate to each traveller. Continue to Thirumalai Nayak Palace and selected market streets, where the city's commercial life provides a lively contrast. If an evening ritual is open for observation, it can be included without promising privileged access or a particular ceremony.

Travel: Guided city visits; temple entry and walking procedures apply.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Madurai

DAY 14

Across the hills to Thekkady

Leave the plains of Tamil Nadu and climb towards the Western Ghats, watching the vegetation and air change as you cross into Kerala. Arrive in Thekkady and settle into your hotel before an introduction to a spice garden. A local host explains the plants and how they are cultivated, connecting familiar ingredients with the landscape where they grow. The evening is kept relaxed before tomorrow's forest and lake programme.

Travel: Approximately 140-160 km; 4-5 hours driving.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Thekkady



Days 15-16 | The lake and forest at Periyar

DAY 15

The forest setting of Periyar

Take an authorised boat outing on Periyar Lake when operating, watching the forest margins for birds and other wildlife. Your naturalist helps you look beyond the most obvious animals to the habitat itself. Later, choose a scheduled guided nature walk suited to your party or a gentler local cultural visit. The exact combination follows the reserve's programme and availability. Return to your hotel with time to rest, enjoying the green hill setting between outings.

Travel: Licensed lake boat outing and a short guided nature activity.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Thekkady

DAY 16

Tea country: Thekkady to Munnar

Follow the hill road to Munnar, passing cultivated slopes and settlements linked to the region's plantations. Stop at suitable viewpoints without turning the transfer into a rushed sequence of attractions. After checking in, enjoy a short walk or a first look at the tea landscape. Two nights here allow time for a proper introduction to tea cultivation and an optional longer walk, balanced with comfortable time at your hotel.

Travel: Approximately 95-110 km; 3.5-4.5 hours driving.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Munnar



Days 17-18 | Tea-covered hills near Munnar

DAY 17

Munnar at a gentle pace

Visit an operating tea experience, factory or museum according to the day's arrangements, learning how leaves move from the hillside to the finished drink. Continue with a guided walk through an authorised part of the plantation landscape, choosing the distance to suit your interests and fitness. The changing patterns of hills and tea fields provide rewarding photographic opportunities. Keep the afternoon flexible for a further viewpoint or quiet time at your hotel.

Travel: Tea visit and an optional guided walk of 1-3 hours.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Munnar

DAY 18

From the hills to Kumarakom

Descend from the Western Ghats towards Kerala's backwater region. The scenery changes from tea-covered hills to palms, rice fields and waterways. Arrive at your lakeside resort and enjoy an easy afternoon, with a short village walk available if you wish. The slower pace here is intentional after several days of touring. Tomorrow's private daytime cruise introduces life along the canals while allowing you to return to a comfortable resort room at night.

Travel: Approximately 150-170 km; 4.5-5.5 hours driving.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Kumarakom



Days 19-20 | The backwaters of Kumarakom

DAY 19

A day on the backwaters

Board a licensed private houseboat for a relaxed daytime cruise through an operating stretch of the backwaters. Watch small boats, waterside homes and agricultural life from the open deck, with your guide explaining how the waterways shape daily routines. Enjoy an included lunch on board and stop for a short local walk where appropriate. Return to your resort later in the day, retaining the comfort of a spacious shore-based room rather than requiring an overnight on the boat.

Travel: Private daytime houseboat cruise, generally 4-5 hours.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Kumarakom

DAY 20

Kumarakom to historic Kochi

Travel to Kochi and explore the Fort Kochi and Mattancherry areas with a guide. Walk past buildings that reflect the city's trading connections and visit selected sites such as St Francis Church, the Dutch Palace museum or the synagogue when open. Near the waterfront, see the Chinese fishing nets and hear how the port developed. A traditional performance can be arranged in the evening, followed by an included farewell dinner.

Travel: Approximately 55-70 km; 1.5-2.5 hours driving.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner | **Overnight:** Kochi



Day 21 | Chinese fishing nets, Fort Kochi

DAY 21

Depart Kochi

Enjoy breakfast before your private transfer to Kochi airport, timed to your chosen flight. Your representative assists with the final arrangements and any onward connection. The twenty-one-day journey concludes after linking Tamil Nadu's temple cities and trading houses with Kerala's hills, forests and waterways. If you would like a longer coastal stay or a separate wellness programme, it can be added privately after the main route.

Travel: Private airport transfer; approximately 1-1.5 hours from Fort Kochi.

Meals: Breakfast | **Journey concludes today**

Make the journey yours

Share your preferred dates, who will be travelling and the experiences you most want to enjoy. Midasia Routes will prepare the accommodation choices and a personal quotation for your party, with the final arrangements brought together in one clear programme.

Begin planning with Sumit

PRIVATE TRAVEL WITH MIDASIA ROUTES

The details, taken care of

Your accommodation. 20 nights in individually selected accommodation. Luxury city hotels, heritage stays and suitable resorts or lodges are chosen to match the route. Exact properties and room categories are confirmed in your quotation.

Arrival and transport. Airport meet-and-greet after customs, baggage assistance, private transfers, a suitable air-conditioned touring vehicle and driver, fuel, parking and road tolls. Domestic flights and reserved air-conditioned train journeys described in this programme are included.

Guiding and visits. English-speaking local specialist guides, the scheduled visits, entrance fees and activities described. Your private travelling party is guided at an agreed pace; park excursions and resort activities follow their operating arrangements.

Meals and practical support. All meals shown each day, drinking water and standard tea or coffee. Vegetarian and other dietary preferences are arranged in advance. Standard tourist-visa application support and government fees for eligible travellers, applicable local taxes, and customary local-guide and driver gratuities are included.

Your journey extras. A private daytime backwater houseboat, Periyar's scheduled boat outing, a suitable guided nature activity and the listed cultural encounters are included. All twenty nights are in shore-based accommodation.

Personal coordination. Pre-travel planning, a detailed arrival briefing and Midasia Routes support throughout your journey. Prices are quoted privately for your dates, room requirements and travelling party.

Not included

International flights; travel and medical insurance; personal shopping and laundry; premium or alcoholic drinks; and optional activities, treatments or extra nights outside the agreed programme.

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A FEW USEFUL DETAILS

Planning your journey

January-February is prioritised because Tamil Nadu's autumn rain pattern differs from Kerala's. Temple access follows local rules. Boat trips, forest activities and cultural performances are arranged within current operating schedules.

Visa issue is subject to government approval and traveller eligibility. The programme is personalised when your dates are agreed; no hotel, flight or departure is held by this brochure. Travel windows describe typical seasonal conditions, rather than a weather forecast.

Kerala Tourism - planning your visit | Planning checked 9 September 2026.

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