TOUR CODE

I15

ADVENTURESABROAD

SOUTHERN INDIA

10 days

Updated 06/01/2013

Day 1 *Arrive in Bangalore*

Today we arrive in Bangalore. Transfer to our hotel.

Overnight in Bangalore. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Bangalore - Mysore*

Today we travel by road to Mysore. Until independence, Mysore was the seat of the maharajas of Mysore, a princely state covering about a third of present day Karnataka.

NOTE: You will meet your Tour Leader and other group members this morning after they arrive from Goa and our tour of western India.

Overnight in Mysore. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Mysore: City Tour*

Today we tour this historic city, including the spectacular Maharaja's Palace. This charming, easy-going city has long been a favourite with travellers -- it's a manageable size, enjoys a good climate and has chosen to retain and promote its heritage rather than replace it. The city is famous for its silk and is also a thriving sandalwood and incense centre.

Overnight in Mysore. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Mysore - Belur & Halebid - Hassan*

Today we travel to Hassan via Belur and Halebid.

Belur and Halebid were both capitals of The Medieval Hoysala kings who built the exquisitely carved temples in the 12th & 13th centuries. Belur is famous for it Hoysala architecture; its Temple of Lord Channakeshava is embellished with carving which has few equals in the world. It took 103 years to complete and you can see why. The facade of the temple is filled with intricate sculptures and friezes with no portion left blank: elephants, episodes from the epics, and sensuous dancers.

Halebid was the seat of Hoysala Kingdom; its great Hoyaleswara Temple was built in the typical Hoysala style. The temple, dating back to the 12th century, is astounding for its wealth of sculptural details. The walls of the temple are covered with an endless variety of gods and goddesses, animals, birds and dancing girls. Yet no two facets of the temple are the same. This magnificent temple -- guarded by a Nandi Bull -- was never completed, despite 86 years of labour.

We continue to Hassan.

Overnight in Hassan. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Hassan - Bangalore: City Tour*

Today we travel by road to Bangalore, the cosmopolitan capital of Karnataka.

Bangalore is called the Garden City for it's delicate blossoms and greenery that impart a unique beauty to this lovely city. The weather is the city's best feature, with pleasant summers and bearable winters. Bangalore, which literally means the 'town of baked beans', was founded by Kempe Gowda, a chieftain of the Vijayanagar Empire, around the 16th century. He built four towers in four directions to specify its boundaries.

Today we tour Bangalore, visiting the Lal Bagh which has a variety of old trees, fountains, lotus pools, terraces and an assortment of tropical herbs and subtropical herbs. We also see the government buildings and the Maharaja's Palace.

Overnight in Bangalore. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Bangalore - Kochi: City Tour*

Early this morning we fly to Kochi (Cochin).

The history of European involvement in Kochi, from the early sixteenth century onwards, is dominated by the aggression of, successively, the Portuguese, Dutch and British, competing in their desire to control the port and its lucrative spice trade. From 1800, the state of Cochin was part of the British Madras Presidency; from 1812 until Independence in 1947, its administration was made the responsibility of a series of diwans, or financial ministers. In the 1920s, the British expanded the port to make it suitable for modern ocean-going ships; extensive dredging created Willingdon Island, between Ernakulam and Fort Cochin.

On arrival we have a tour of Kochi, including: Chinese fishing Nets -- A legacy of one of the earliest visitors to the Malabar coast, these nets are unmistakable as one enters the harbour. Records show that they were first erected between AD 1350 and 1450. Constructed out of Teak wood and Bamboo poles, they work on the principle of balance. The best place to watch is from Vasco Da Gama square, a narrow promenade that parallels the beach with little stalls that serve fresh seafood, tender coconuts and so on.

Santa Cruz Basilica: Built by the Portuguese, the church was elevated to a Cathedral by the Pope Paul IV in 1558. Spared by the Dutch conqueror of Cochin who destroyed many Catholic buildings in 1663, it later fell into the hands of the British who demolished it when they took over Cochin in 1795. For almost 100 years there was no church on the site, until the Bishop Dom Gomez Vereira commissioned a new building in 1887.

Overnight in Kochi. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Kochi - Allaphuza: Houseboat*

We continue by road to Alappuzha (Alleppey), known as the "Venice of the East", situated on Vembanad Lake, the longest in India. A maze of canals and a network of bridges give this busy commercial town its descriptive sobriquet. Alleppey is known for its coir, the retted fibre of the coconut husk and for black pepper.

Today we board our houseboat for a very special Kerala delight -- a slow boat through its forests and palm-shaded canals. We take a leisurely cruise on the beautiful backwaters, enjoying the magnificent scenery along the waterways and stopping to admire what history and religion have left along the way.

THE HOUSEBOAT will be approx 60 feet long and 13 feet wide in the middle. There are comfortable beds, and traditional lanterns, and air-conditioning. There will be a sundeck for daytime relaxation. The boats are made of local natural fibres that truly echo the villagers harmony with the natural surroundings. As your oarsman slowly and silently propels us along the backwaters, we will enjoy the magnificent scenery along the waterways. We will stop to view working villages and witness locals fishing, swimming, crafting, and bathing (most boats will have oarsman though some will be motorized with a silencer on the motor).

NOTE: Single cabins are NOT available on the houseboat. Single supplements reflect sharing for this one night.

Overnight houseboat cruise. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 8 *Allaphuza - Chennai*

Today we return to Kochi and fly to Chennai (Madras).

Overnight in Chennai. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Chennai: Mahabalipuram & Kanchipuram*

Today we travel to 60 km (37 mi) to Mahabalipuram, the seaport of the ancient Palava dynasty of Kanci. The temples and carvings here date back to the 7th century. They stand out because of their simplicity and the fact that they also depict many scenes from the every-day life of every-day people. It is now recognized as the site of some of the greatest architectural and sculptural achievements in India.

Kanchipuram is known as one of India's Seven Sacred Cities and the historical capital of the Pallavas under whom, from AD 6th to 8th century, it became the citadel of Cholas, Vijayanagar Kings, the Muslims and the British. It has been a centre of Tamil learning, cultural and religious background for centuries. Kanchi has magnificent temples of unique architectural beauty bearing eloquent testimony to its glorious Dravidian heritage.

After a comprehensive tour of the site we return to Chennai.

Overnight in Chennai. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Chennai: City Tour - Departure*

Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, is, like Mumbai and Calcutta, a comparatively modern creation. It was founded by the British East India Company in 1639, on a narrow five-kilometre strip of land between the Cooum and Adyar rivers, a few kilometres north of the ancient Tamil port of Mylapore and the Portuguese settlement of San Thome, established in 1522. The British were repeatedly challenged by the French who, in 1746, destroyed much of the city. Robert Clive ("Clive of India"), then a clerk, was taken prisoner, an experience said to have inspired him to become a campaigner. Clive was among the first to re-enter Chennai when it was retaken three years alter, and continued to use it as his base. Following this, fortifications were strengthened and the British survived a year-long French siege (1759), completing the work in 1783. By this time, however, Calcutta was in the ascendancy and Madras lost its national importance.

Our city sightseeing of Chennai includes a visit to the National Art Gallery and Museum, which has a selection of ancient paintings from almost all schools of art, as well as a section entirely devoted to modern art. We will visit Fort St George, once a stronghold of the British; St Mary's Church, the oldest Anglican church in India; the San Thome Cathedral where the remains of St Thomas the Apostle are believed to have been buried; the Mylapore Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva and the Light House which is the only one of its kind in the world to be located on top of a High Court. We drive along the Marina, the thirteen kilometre-long beach which, with its shining white sands, aqua blue sea and violet lights at night, is the pride of Chennai.

Later we transfer to the airport for our homeward flight. Departure from Chennai.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are booking your own air, please ensure that your flight departs AFTER 8 pm (or miss today's sightseeing tour).

BON VOYAGE! Meal plan: Breakfast.