Tea Trails and Backwaters of Kerala



Trip style:	Destination:	Walking Grade	Carbon Footprint:
Walking with sightseeing	India	4	3489kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

All towering mountains, tropical valleys, and palm-fringed paradise beaches, it's easy to see why Kerala is called 'God's Own Country'. Immerse yourself in the ever-changing landscapes of India's most captivating state as you explore the historic spice-trading city of Kochi, spend the night aboard a riverboat on the tranquil backwaters of Allepey, and embark on thrilling treks along the tea trails of the lush Western Ghats. There'll also be a trip to Tamil Nadu to marvel at Madurai's intricately carved Sri Meenakshi Temple and the chance to spot wild Indian elephants in their natural habitat. Join like-minded travellers on an adventure that promises unforgettable experiences and new friendships.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Trekking through the spectacular Western Ghats
- Cruising Kerala's tropical backwaters on a houseboat
- Sampling South Indian street food on a Madurai walking tour
- Spotting wild elephants, boar, and buffalo in Periyar National Park
- Exploring Fort Kochi and enjoying a sunset cruise
- Learning about local dishes in a cooking class

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Guided walks and sightseeing with local leaders
- HF Holidays Tour Manager (for 2026 only)
- 11 nights' touring accommodation across Kerala
- A night on a traditional houseboat
- 12 breakfasts, 5 lunches & 12 dinners
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- All in-destination transport
- Return flights from UK including baggage and transfers

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 **Depart the UK**

Depart the UK on an overnight flight to India.

Day 2 **Arrive Kochi and welcome meal**

Arrive at the international airport of Kochi, meet your local Tour Manager and after a traditional welcome 'Swagat', we head to the hotel. After check-in you will have time to freshen up, and you might like to have some lunch through room service or at the hotel restaurant/coffee shop. This afternoon we head to Old Kochi and explore its Jewish heritage visiting the Parades Synagogue, the oldest in India. We then make our way to the Dutch Palace, built by the Portuguese as a gift to the then Maharaja of Kochi. We will wander down a historic narrow lane filled with antique shops, spice markets, art galleries and colonial-era architecture.

Late afternoon we take a sunset cruise on the historic harbor. We will pass iconic landmarks such the towering Chinese fishing nets. After this relaxing way to see Kochi, we return to our hotel for dinner.

Day 3 **Fort Kochi Sightseeing tour**

After breakfast we will tour Fort Kochi which is known for its colonial-era architecture. We will visit St Francis Church and marvel at the Chinese Fishing nets up close. We will stop at the Dhobi Khana, a historic laundry station and a spice market. We get back on our coach for the drive to the serene island village of Poothotta for an exclusive experience which is part of a community based Responsible tourism initiative. Our local host will greet us on arrival, and we will travel by canoe through narrow canals and watch village activities as we float by. We will enjoy a home-cooked lunch provided by local families. This is an exclusive experience for our groups. Return to the hotel and relax before dinner.

Day 4 **Kochi – Thattekad – Munnar**

Distance: 2.5 miles (4kms)

This morning we'll drive from Kochi to Munnar. Once the summer resort of the British administration in South India, Munnar is a beautiful Hill Station on the Western Ghats that still retains its old-world charm. Famous for its tea plantations, the town is situated at the confluence of three mountain streams Mudrapauzha, Naliathanii and Kundala. With its sprawling estates, rolling hills, sparkling waterfalls, picture-postcard hamlets and undulating valleys, Munnar is a spectacular place to explore.

Along the way, we'll stop at the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary for a nature walk where we're in with a chance of spotting kingfishers, storks, and hornbills. Afterwards, we'll continue to Munnar, check into our hotel, and spend the rest of the day at leisure or visiting the local market.

Day 5 **Munnar Tea Plantations Walk**

Distance: 5 miles (8km)

Ascent: 300m (985ft)

Descent: 215m (700ft)

After an early breakfast, we'll drive through the old town of Munnar and arrive to a tiny village of Nagarmudi, where we start our trek accompanied by a local guide. The trail commences with a gradual ascent through the tea plantations and then climbs into Seven Malai hills. Walking through cardamom and coffee plantations, we'll reach the top and be rewarded with spectacular views over Annamudi Peak, Changulam Lake, Chittrapuram Dam, Munnar and & local villages. We'll descend on the same route before joining another route which finishes close to Old Munnar from which we are transferred to our hotel.

Day 6 **Munnar Top Valley Walk**

Distance: 6.2 miles (10km)

Ascent: 350m

Descent: 420m

Departing the hotel after breakfast, we'll drive to Ellapetty where we'll start our walk to the top valley, a panoramic viewpoint at an elevation of 2,200 metres above sea- level. Led by a professional guide, this trek takes us through grasslands, evergreen shola and montane forest, and across many ridges of the Western Ghats. Along the way, we'll be rewarded with spectacular views over the lowlands of Tamil Nadu, plus the chance to spot some of the region's endemic bird species.

Day 7 **Munnar – Madurai**

After breakfast, we leave Kerala's hill country behind and drive east across the plains to Madurai (around 4–5 hours), one of South India's oldest and most culturally important cities. On arrival, we check into our hotel and take time to freshen up before heading out for an afternoon visit to Thirumalai Nayakkar Mahal. Built in the 17th century, its grand arches and lofty pillars offer a glimpse of the Nayak rulers' former splendour.

Next, we visit the remarkable Meenakshi–Sundareshwarar Temple, a vast and richly decorated complex at the heart of the old town. This evening, you can choose to return to the temple for the optional aarti ceremony – a moving ritual of music, chanting, and procession – or enjoy a relaxed evening at leisure.
Please note: Meenakshi Temple is currently under restoration and the main gopurams (entrance towers) may be covered in scaffolding. Works are expected to finish by spring 2026 but could run beyond this.

Day 8 Madurai Sightseeing Tour

After breakfast, we set out early to see Madurai waking up. We begin at the city's flower market, a feast of colour and fragrance where garlands of jasmine, marigolds, and roses are woven for daily temple rituals. If time allows, we'll also take a look at the nearby banana and vegetable market, where lively trading offers a real insight into local life.

Next, we visit the Gandhi Memorial Museum, housed in Tamukkam Palace, once the summer residence of Rani Mangammal, a queen regent of the Madurai Nayak kingdom. From here, we continue to Mariamman Teppakulam, a vast temple tank with a shrine at its centre. Later, there's the chance to sample some of Madurai's best-loved local delicacies before an evening at leisure.

Day 9 Madurai – Thekkady

Distance: 2.5miles (4km)

This morning we'll make our way to the bustling village of Thekkady, one of India's most important spice-growing regions. Enjoy a wonderfully scenic drive which climbs through the Western Ghats with fantastic views across Tamil Nadu before arriving at our hotel. Once we've checked in, there'll be a tour of a spice garden where we'll learn all about growing cardamom, cinnamon, turmeric, vanilla, peppercorns, chilies, and more. There will also be information about the spices uses in cooking and health therapies.

Your Local leader will take you on an orientation tour of Thekkedy then the afternoon is free for you to choose where to eat for lunch and have a wander. This evening, we attend a Kalarippayattu martial arts performance which demonstrates an ancient tradition including acrobatics, unarmed combat, displays of the use of weapons and poses to represent strong animals like lions. You sit on benches overlooking a sunken arena so you can see all the action.

Day 10 Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary

Distance: 3 miles (5km)

Embark on an early morning jungle walk in Periyar National Park, one of the largest in Southern India, for the chance to spot wild Indian elephants, wild boar, buffalo, and more with an expert guide. In the afternoon, there'll be a boat ride on Periyar Lake, with opportunities to spot rare riverbank wildlife. Later, we'll participate in a cooking demonstration with a local Keralan family and dine on our creations for dinner. It's a fun beginner course where you'll be taught how to cook Indian food and use Indian spices—all while getting acquainted with family members of a traditional Indian home.

Day 11 Thekkady - Alleppey Backwaters

We'll make our way from Thekkady to the coast for one of the highlights of the whole tour today. Climb aboard a traditional Keralan houseboat and cruise the backwaters of Allepey for an authentic snapshot of local life. Built of Anjili wood and bamboo, these enchanting houseboats, were the traditional mode of transporting goods across Southern India for centuries. Now they have been carefully converted into cruise boats. On board, you can try your hand at fishing, grab a drink from the bar or just sit back and savour the peace and quiet of this tranquil waterway. We'll drop anchor on the beautiful Vembanad Lake and be served a delicious dinner before overnighting in your comfortable cabin.

Day 12 Alleppey – Marari

After waking to the sounds of birds on the riverbank, we'll enjoy breakfast on the houseboat, before a drive to beautiful Marari Beach and the fisherman's village of Mararikulam. We'll check into our hotel where you can enjoy the coastal setting before dinner.

Day 13 Marari

Our final day is free for you to spend relaxing at the beach or joining your guide for a morning walk along the coastline. Our hotels have Ayurvedic spa treatments which you might like to experience. (pay locally) Along the seafront are some delightful cafes and restaurants often relaxing hut-style premises under palm trees with views of the ocean. They offer fresh seafood, traditional Kerala cuisine, juices, and some international options. Later this afternoon we'll transfer back to Kochi for our final evening and dinner.

Day 14 Kochi – UK

Transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK.

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 4

The most active Gentle grade, with longer walks, some ascent, and possible steps, stiles, or off-path uneven ground. Typically, 6-7 miles (10-12km) with around 1,000ft (300m) of ascent.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Abad Copper Castle, Munnar

Nestled in the hills of Munnar, Hotel Abad Copper Castle provides a picturesque retreat with breathtaking views. After a day of exploring, unwind in comfortable rooms and enjoy quality dining. The hotel's standout location provides easy access to tea plantations and scenic spots

JC Residency, Madurai

Located in the heart of Madurai, the JC Residency blends modern comfort with classic elegance. Spacious rooms, a refreshing pool, and gourmet dining make it an ideal base for exploring the historic temples and vibrant culture of this ancient city.

Greenwoods Resort, Thekkady

Greenwoods Resort in Thekkady is a haven of tranquility amidst tropical greenery. Where Experience luxury and nature combine, accommodation comes by way of charming cottage-style rooms. As for facilities, you'll find an inviting pool surrounded by Kerala's lush landscapes, plus a contemporary restaurant serving organic Indian and international cuisine.

Deluxe Houseboat, Allepy

Once traditional cargo vessels, deluxe houseboats now offer a charming on-the-water retreat complete with bedrooms, kitchen, living area, and bathrooms. Built from bamboo and coconut husk ropes, they glide through tranquil backwaters. Enjoy local cuisine by an onboard chef, plus private air-conditioned cabins and bathrooms.

Abad Turtle Beach Resort, Marari

The hotel has a private beach, a swimming pool, restaurant and Spa. We will stay in Individual beach cottages with their own sit out area, bathroom and are equipped with Air-Conditioning and Wi-Fi.

Hotel Airlink Castle, Kochi

This hotel is located only 3 miles (4km) to Kochi International Airport. It is a 5-star hotel with restaurants and a 24-hour coffee shop and a premium bar. All the rooms are designed for comfort with beautifully carved wood decoration and furniture. Facilities include LCD TV, tea/coffee maker, mini bar and free Wi-Fi.

Travancore Court Hotel

The Travancore Court Hotel is located in the heart of Cochin, just a short drive from the Ernakulam Junction Railway Station. It features a rooftop pool, spa, dining options, and complimentary Wi-Fi in rooms. The comfortable rooms feature large windows and wooden furnishings, as well as air-conditioning, cable TV and minibar. Facilities include a 24-hour coffee shop, fitness centre and sauna.

SAFETY ON YOUR HOLIDAY

Safety information

Please inform us of any medical situation which may affect your enjoyment of the holiday. This is important because our leaders must consider both group and individual safety at all times.

Whilst out with the group, we respectfully request that you:

- Please listen to any safety instructions and other directions from the leader
- Keep group members in view, especially if weather or visibility is poor
- Please stay where you are if you become separated from the group. The leader will retrace their steps to find you.

Each leader carries a first aid kit but is not allowed to supply any medication including aspirin, paracetamol, antihistamines and antiseptic cream. You may wish to bring these items with you in your own kit (see Suggested Kit List).

In the unlikely event that your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack and call emergency services.. Please then call our emergency number (sent in your final dispatch) and let us know there is a problem.

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Please contact us as far in advance as possible if you have any specific dietary requirements and we will do our best to meet your needs.

If you require a specific meal on the flight, please let us know as soon as possible, and no later than 96 hours before travel.

VACCINATIONS & HEALTH

Vaccinations & health information for Kerala

This information is subject to change. In all cases, we **highly recommend** you consult your GP both for up to date details and for more information on what is appropriate to your situation. As a rule, travellers should be up to date with their routine vaccinations and boosters as recommended in the UK - including, for example, the MMR and diptheria, tetanus, polio vaccines.

Requirements can change, and we recommend you check in good time ahead of your holiday.

It is recommended for most travellers to have:

- Diphtheria
- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid
- Tetanus
- Polio

Malaria prevention is recommended too; consult your doctor for what is best suited to your specific needs. Generally, we recommend all guests to take steps to avoid being bitten by mosquitos.

Please note: the use or possession of some common prescription or over-the-counter medicines is banned in some countries.

If you will be carrying medication, please check with the country's embassy/consulate prior to travel. As an extra precaution, it is recommended to:

- Keep medication in its original packet
- Take a copy of your prescription
- If possible, ask your chemist to write the name of your medication in the language of the country you're visiting

For further information on country specific advice, visit www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk or www.traveldoctor.co.uk.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passport & Visa information for Kerala

Passports

Your passport must be machine readable, with 2 blank pages for your visa and valid for a minimum of 180 days at the time of your visa application. India's Bureau of Immigration has announced that with immediate effect, foreign nationals who arrive at an Indian port holding nonmachine-readable passports will be denied entry.

Visas

British, Australian, Canadian and US citizens require an e-visa to enter India. This can be done online. Please visit the following website for further information: https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html

Current cost is $100 (UK citizens; fee is non-refundable) plus a 2.5% credit card charge. You will need to upload a photo and complete the application form online; you may also be required to upload a PDF your passport photo page. You can apply for the e-visa a minimum 4 days in advance of your travel date, and as early as 120 days before you travel. The e-visa should be granted and emailed to you within 4 days.

You must confirm that the e-visa is granted before travelling and take a printed copy of the e-visa with you. Please ensure that you keep your passport and visa on you always, except when out walking

E-arrival card:

In addition to the Visa, foreign nationals arriving in India must complete an e-arrival card online before reaching immigration. This digital disembarkation form replaces the paper-based arrival card, although paper forms will continue to be accepted until March 2026.

The online e-arrival card can be completed up to 72 hours before you arrive. More details are available on the Indian visa website.

India Entry & Departure Requirements

Entry into India

All passengers travelling to India are required to complete the Air Suvidha 2.0 Self-Declaration Form before travel. The form can be completed up to 72 hours before arrival in India and should be submitted online via the official government website. Passengers should carry a digital or printed copy of the completed declaration for presentation on arrival if requested.

Air Suvidha Form:

https://airsuvidha.civilaviation.gov.in/

Departure from India

All passengers departing from airports in India must present a valid boarding pass or ticket containing a scannable 2D barcode to gain entry to the airport terminal. We recommend checking in online before travelling and carrying either a digital or printed boarding pass.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

Kerala has warm tropical weather all year round. There is a monsoon season, but we run tours in the dry and cooler times of the year. It is still a good idea to pack for showers which can happen any time of the year but usually they are less frequent and short lived if they come at all.

Essentials

- Walking shoes that have ankle support and good grip (heavy boots are not necessary)
- Waterproof jacket
- Lightweight clothing for the humidity
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Torch (handy for hotel grounds and in the room)
- Water bottle (water is provided throughout the tour)
- Rucksack/day pack
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles (if you prefer using them)
- Swimwear and travel towel (hotels have pools)
- Snacks (for coach trips)
- Dry bags
- Camera/mobile phone

Optional

- Mat (something small to sit on for picnics or rest stops when walking)

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITH FLIGHTS)

With flights

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from selected UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITHOUT FLIGHTS)

Travel independently

If you prefer to book the holiday without flights and make your own travel arrangements you will still be able to make use of the return group transfers between the airport and hotel, which are included in the cost of your holiday. You must contact us on +44 (0)20 3974 8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk at least 8 weeks before your holiday start date to provide your flight details if you wish to join the transfers. If you do not contact us, we will assume you are making independent travel arrangements.

If you are arriving ahead of the group, and are meeting them at the first hotel, please leave a message at the hotel reception for the HF Holidays' leader or local leader, detailing your room number, and a mobile telephone number if possible. The leader will contact you once the group arrives. If you are arriving after the group, a message will be left for you at the hotel reception, welcoming you and giving details of the time and place to meet the group.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so before you travel.

For more information about healthcare and its costs, please visit: https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/

Modest dress

On your trip we advise you to dress modestly and respectfully. Both men and women should aim to cover their shoulders and knees, especially if visiting religious sites or rural areas. Opt for loose-fitting and conservative clothing to show respect for local customs and traditions.

LUGGAGE

Luggage information for Kerala Guided Walking Holiday

Luggage allowance

1 piece checked-in luggage (max 30kg)

Please check details of your airline's baggage allowance, as shown on your e-ticket. Remember to also check any connecting flights you may have booked.

Lost/damaged luggage

If your bag or its contents are damaged or lost while in the airline's care, this should be reported to the baggage service agents at the airport on arrival. They will assess the damage; in some cases, the airline may decide to settle your claim immediately.

You will be given a reference to quote to your insurance company if an immediate settlement is not possible - in many cases, baggage claims can only be accepted in writing. A baggage claim form must be obtained from the airport.

LOCAL CURRENCY

Local currency for Kerala

Rupee (Rs). Debit/credit cards are accepted in major cities. In smaller towns, cash or Mastercard/Visa are accepted. The Indian Rupee is a restricted currency and the limit you can carry in and out of the country is 25,000 Rupee which is around £200 depending on exchange rates. US$ and GBP£ are the easiest currencies to exchange. Please carry some small rupee notes for shopping.

LOCAL TIME

Local time for Kerala

GMT/UTC +5.5 hrs

ELECTRICITY

Electricity information for Kerala

220V, round 3 pin plugs (larger top pin)

TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

Document produced: 25 November 2026