

Southern India Family Tour

December / January
school holidays

Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different





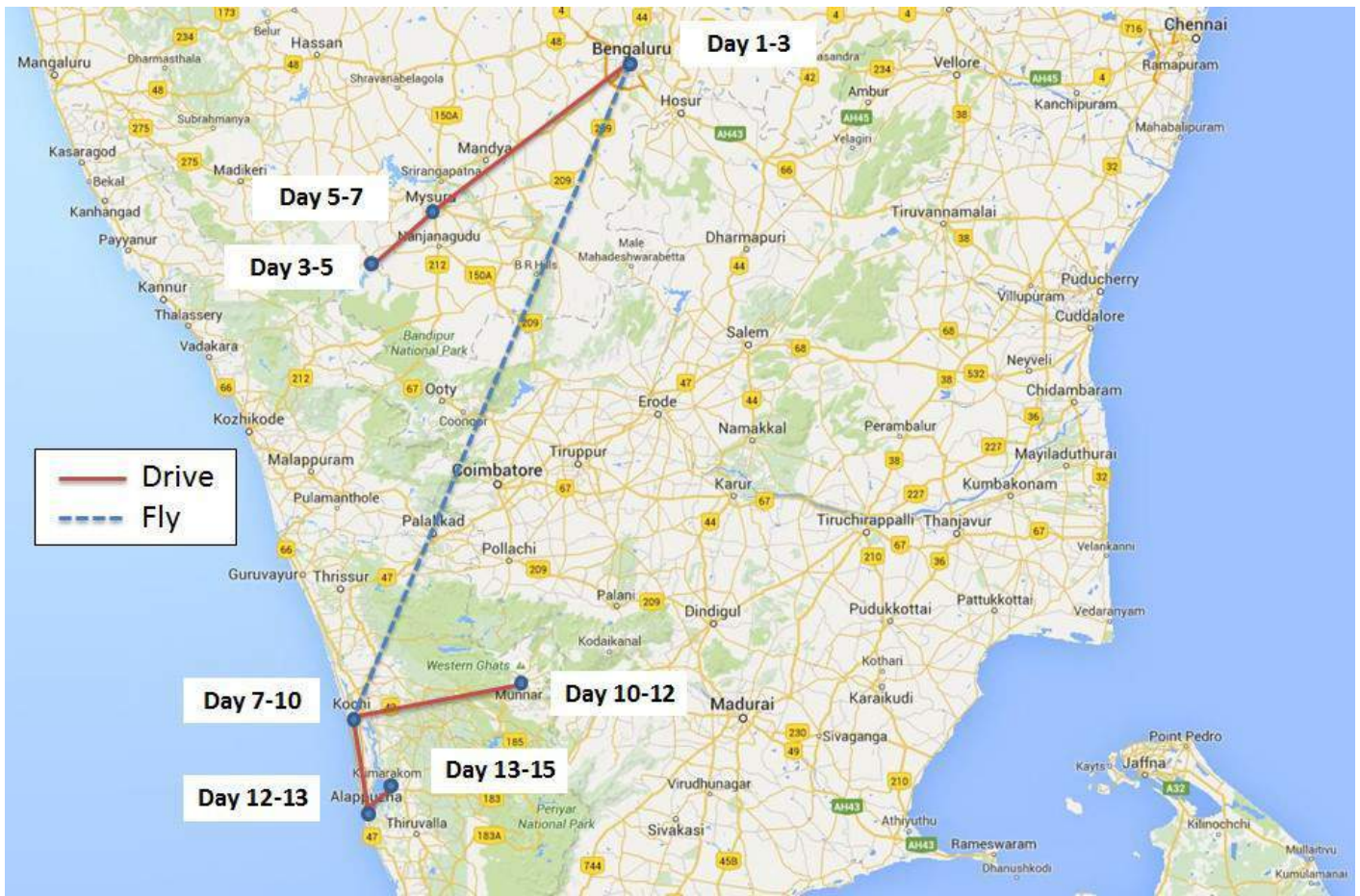
SOUTHERN INDIA FAMILY TOUR

India offers a stunning variety of experiences in its expanse of about 3.3 million sq kms. From the chilly peaks of the Himalayas to the hot green Ganges' plains; from the majestic Rajasthan deserts to massive mangrove forests and the famous sea and sand and spices of Goa. Each region presents a totally different cultural experience with its own sounds and colours, arts and crafts, stories and tales. Southern India in particular has something for all the family – peaceful backwaters and spice plantations, incredible wildlife in expansive parks, ancient temples, colourful bazaars and stunning scenery. And as with all our family tours, good quality hotels await at the end of each day in excellent locations with great service and oodles of delicious food. As always, several “must–do” excursions are included but many other options are also offered, leaving it to you and the family to do as much or as little as you choose.

Throughout the tour, you will be in the good company of an experienced local, English–speaking guide who is on hand to help you get the most out of the experience. You’ll be pleasantly surprised at the quality of the hotels and the service they offer. And there’s every good chance you’ll see wildlife that will make a lasting impression. Diverse plants and animals abound in Southern India.

Depending on the number of passengers, the tour travels by bus and boat – fascinating ways to explore the peaceful backwaters, wildlife parks and colourful culture right up close. Like its people, Southern India’s culture is a rich mosaic that grows out of its ancient roots and foreign influences. It is vibrant and chaotic, a region of incredible contrasts and paradoxes that never fail to delight. Bring the family and explore it with Blue Dot Travel!

TRAVEL INFORMATION — SOUTHERN INDIA



TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

The most popular route from Australia to Bangalore is via Singapore. As an indication, the flight out of Sydney or Melbourne takes about 7.5--8 hours to Singapore and then just over 4 hours to Bangalore. There are daily flights with a stopover of 2.5 hours going over and as little as an hour on the way back.

Flights are not included in our tour cost as we find many travellers have their personal preferences across airlines, day or night flights, class of travel etc. We offer a full travel service and can plan and book your flights subject to your preferences or you can book your own flights or use frequent flyer points. We are unable to book frequent flyer flights on your behalf.

While specific accommodation has been nominated throughout the itinerary, if any is unavailable, a suitable and equivalent property and / or room type will be substituted.

CLIMATE

As in all countries that are geographically large, the climate varies from place to place but generally speaking, the ideal time to visit India is in its winter from December through March when the sun is shining and temperatures, humidity and rainfall are at their lowest.

Bangalore lies in the heart of the Mysore Plateau at an average elevation of 900 m. It enjoys a more moderate tropical savanna climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. The coolest month is January where the average temperature is 15-27°C.

Kabini and Mysore follow a similar climate to Bangalore but being at lower altitudes, temperatures tends to be a degree or two higher.

Cochin is located on the southwest coast of India and at less than 10° north of the equator with a tropical monsoon climate. Average temperatures vary little across the year with the high usually 29--32°C and the low, 22-25°C. From December to March, the area averages only 1--2 rainy days each month with only about an inch of rain falling. The monsoons hit in April through to November.

Munnar is situated at about 1,600 m above sea level, making it an ideal location for growing and producing tea. The highland climate brings cooler temperatures with highs in January to December of 22-25°C and average lows of 13-15°C. It's a little wetter than the coast with an average of only 2--5 rainy days in this cooler winter period.

Day 01

AUSTRALIA – INDIA

Depart Australia to Bangalore, usually via Singapore to arrive late in the evening. After clearing immigration and customs, you will be met by your local guide in the arrivals hall and be transferred to your hotel in the heart of the city, about 30kms from the airport.

*Overnight: Monarch Luxor, Bangalore
(Cottage room / suite)*

Day 02

BANGALORE



India's own Silicon Valley, Bangalore is the hub of information technology in India, adding a young, vibrant, cosmopolitan atmosphere to this city's rich history under a succession of feudal rulers and as a canton for the British. Visit Tipu's Palace with its elegant teak pillars and decorative frescoes before heading to Lalbagh Botanical Gardens and its huge collection of tropical plants and welcoming lakes. For a final escape from the urban clamour, walk through Cubbon Park, populated with numerous indigenous tree species and a great vantage point to watch the locals in their everyday routines.

*Overnight: Monarch Luxor, Bangalore (Cottage Room)
Meals included: Breakfast*

Day 03

BANGALORE to KABINI (Drive time -- 5 hours)

After breakfast, transfer the 200kms south--west to Kabini, home of Nagarhole National Park. This former game reserve's dry, deciduous habitat provides a refuge for a great variety of wildlife with a rich mammal and bird population. Renowned for the Royal Bengal tiger, Asian elephant, leopard and dhole (wild dogs), Kabini has earned a spot on the world's top 5 destinations for viewing wildlife. On arrival, choose between three afternoon activities ... cycle the trails, visit Bale Elephant Camp or a Non--Government Organisation (NGO) working on a local community project, where guests are invited to get involved.

*Overnight: Red Earth, Kabini (Luxury Cottage)
Meals included: Breakfast*

Day 04

KABINI



Time for a Jeep safari this morning! Set off through the rich forest of Nagarhole with its hills, valleys, streams and waterfalls. If luck is on your side, you will not only glimpse the flagship species but also the Indian gaur (bison), Indian leopard, wild dog, jackal, hyena, mongoose and sambar to name a few. The park hosts over 270 bird species, notably the critically endangered Oriental white--backed vulture.

Return to the hotel for lunch before heading out on a boat safari on the Kabini River, an artery for wildlife and a fabulous way to experience the tranquillity of the forest and waterways.

*Overnight: Red Earth, Kabini (Luxury Cottage)
Meals included: Breakfast*

Day 05

KABINI to MYSORE (Drive time -- 1.5 hours)

Known as the city of spice, silk and sandalwood, Mysore has the charm of old--world royalty and religion. The city is best--known for the Mysore Palace with its nightly avatar lit up by 96,000 lights.

Check into the hotel on arrival and the rest of the day is free to explore the city or stay put and make the most of the hotel's facilities. There is an option to spend time with the kids learning traditional Indian games which surprise with their simplicity and variety.

*Overnight: Royal Orchid Metropole, Mysore
(Heritage Room or similar)*

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 06

MYSORE

Set off on a sight-seeing circuit of the city and its many palaces, each with its own unique style and story to tell. The most regal is the Maharaja's Palace, a lavish residence of the princes who ruled from the 14th to 20th century. Continue on to the temple atop Chamundi Hill to enjoy sweeping views of the city.



In the afternoon, you get to choose: take an open Jeep tour to the island fortress of Srirangapatna OR visit the Ranganthitthu Bird Sanctuary with a boat ride past marsh crocodiles as they bask in the sun and cruise within touching distance of the birds.

Overnight: Royal Orchid Metropole, Mysore (Heritage Room)

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 07

MYSORE to BANGALORE AIRPORT to COCHIN (drive time -- 4 hours; flight time -- 70 minutes)

Drive to Bangalore Airport for an early afternoon flight to Cochin. You will be met by your new local guide and transfer to your hotel located in the heart of one of Southern India's most vibrant and energetic cities. An important trading post on the Spice Route, Cochin is a true melting pot where colossal Chinese fishing nets mingle with Dutch palaces, Sephardic synagogues and Portuguese forts along the edge of the Arabian Sea. The Fort Cochin area offers a thriving arts and cultural scene, great restaurants and diverse markets.

Overnight: Vivanta by Taj Malabar, Cochin (Superior Room, sea view)

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 08

COCHIN

This morning, explore the fascinating Fort Cochin with your guide. You'll easily spot the European influence from the British and Dutch colonial era, as well as the long line of cantilevered Chinese fishing nets which were, according to legend, introduced by emissaries of Kubla Khan's court. Stroll down to St Francis's church and discover its mixed catholic, protestant, Anglican and Indian history. Continue past Durbar Hall to the Dutch cemetery, which marks the deaths of Dutch traders far from their home soil.

After lunch (own expense), visit the Portuguese--built Mattancherry Palace which now houses a small but exquisite museum of royal artefacts. Visit the Jewish synagogue and town, built in honour of the family in Cochin who can trace their roots back to King Solomon. The town's old--world charms come from its lanes lined with colonial buildings, antique curio shops and the remains of the original spice bazaar.



In the evening, enjoy a sunset cruise on Cochin Harbour, ending up at the huge Chinese fishing nets. Head to Vasco da Gama Square, a narrow promenade running along the beach, for the best vantage point to watch the nets being lowered into the sea and the catch being brought in.

Overnight: Vivanta by Taj Malabar, Cochin (Superior Room, sea view)

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 09

COCHIN to MUNNAR

After breakfast, drive inland to Munnar, a picturesque town nestled amid hectares of sprawling tea and spice estates and verdant forests. Once the summer retreat of the British Government, its name stems from its location at the confluence of three mountain streams.

Overnight: Spice Tree, Munnar (Classic Room, jacuzzi)
Meals included: Breakfast

Day 10

MUNNAR

Head to Eravikulam National Park at the base of Anamundi mountain in a pristine stretch of the Western Ghats range. The park was created to preserve the natural environment of the Nilgiri tahr (mountain goat) but is also a habitat for leopards, macaques and a vast number of birds.



The startling blue *kurunji* flower – which only blooms once every 12 years – is also found here. FYI, the next bloom is expected in 2018! The blooms cover the entire hillside and are called the *Nilgiris*, meaning *blue mountains*.

In the afternoon, you get to choose one of three activities: visit a tea estate and learn the story behind your morning cuppa; or visit Shristi/Dare, a school for differently abled children; or take a short hike – complete with picnic – to Kovilkadavu, home of the Muniyara prehistoric dolmens which cover the entire hillside and valley.



Overnight: Spice Tree, Munnar (Classic Room, jacuzzi)
Meals included: Breakfast

Day 11

MUNNAR to ALLEPPEY (Drive time -- 5.5 hours)

After breakfast, drive back through Kochi and south to Alleppey for a most memorable experience – board a houseboat at Pallathuruthy boat jetty and cruise the backwaters of Kerala. This bewildering labyrinth of waterways is comprised of lakes and canals lined with such dense vegetation as to make you feel completely cut off from the rest of the world. The cruise will take you through the rice bowl of Kerala with its lush wealth of paddy crops. In the evening, enjoy the *Ottamthullal* show on the deck of the houseboat. This form of art's origins lie in 2nd century BC with colourful makeup and costumes to present acting, dance and recitation.

Overnight: Houseboat (Premium Room)
Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 12

ALLEPPEY to KUMARAKOM



After breakfast, disembark the houseboat at Kumarakom and check into the hotel. Nestled snugly into the banks of Vembanad Lake, this calm and tranquil place is a tropical delight of blue skies, palm trees, luscious fruits and flowers and truly is the ideal way to get away from it all.

Overnight: CGH Coconut Lagoon, (Heritage Mansion Room)
Meals included: Breakfast

Day 13

KUMARAKOM

After breakfast, visit women weavers in nearby villages spinning coconut fibres into rope. Continue on to the charming Phillip Kutty Farm and walk through the crops of coconuts, spices & fruit before enjoying an entertaining and interactive session on Syrian Christian cuisine.

Three options await in the afternoon: rest up at the resort; take a guided walk with a naturalist through the tropical forests of Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary with a boat ride on Lake Vembanad included; take a walk around the resort to see the abundance of flora and fauna, including spectacular birds, dragon flies and butterflies.



Overnight: CGH Coconut Lagoon (Heritage Mansion Room)
Meals included: Breakfast

Day 11

KUMARAKOM to COCHIN (Drive time -- 1.5 hours)

After breakfast, drive to Cochin Airport and start the homeward journey.



Southern India Family Tour

Please contact us for quote.

Minimum numbers: The tour requires a minimum of 4 people to guarantee departure.

How to book: To secure your place on the tour, complete a booking form and provide a \$250 deposit per person at the same time (or before). We offer a full travel service and can plan and book your flights subject to your preferences across airlines, schedules and availability. Please call for a quote.

Payment terms: If not booked on a group basis, payment for flights falls due within 5 days of booking them. If booked on a group basis, total tour cost less deposit paid is due no later than 60 days prior to departure. Failure to meet these terms may mean your place on the tour is forfeited.

Payment for optional excursions: Your in-country guide will keep a tab of all of the extra excursions and additional expenses incurred by you and your family. The final amount due will be advised on the last day and is payable by cash only (not credit card) in local, Australian or US currency. For costs of the optional excursions, please refer to the separate brochure which will allow you to budget.

This brochure provides general information and photos are for representation only. Information is correct as at time of printing, however changes may occur without notice.

It is the traveller's responsibility to check individual itineraries in detail in conjunction with the complete Terms and Conditions (including for currency fluctuations) available on our website at www.bluedottravel.com.au before making a decision to travel.

ACCOMMODATION

All accommodation is of good quality, around 3½ to 4½--star. At a minimum, you will have clean rooms and comfortable beds wherever you go and sometimes, impressive luxury. The local service can be different to here at home but just remember you are on holidays in a very special part of the world.

The properties and room types mentioned in this itinerary are those we have requested. Should any not be available, an equivalent alternative will be provided. Please view the links below only as an indication of what awaits.

- [Monarch Luxor, Bangalore](#)
Cottage Room
- [Red Earth, Kabini](#)
Luxury Cottage
- [Royal Orchid Metropole, Mysore](#)
Heritage Room
- [Vivanta by Taj Malabar, Cochin](#)
(Superior Room, sea view)
- [Spice Tree, Munnar](#)

