



# SOUTH INDIA Chennai to Cochin

February 17-March 2, 2023  
14 Days /12 Nights



**WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL  
OF GREATER HOUSTON**

*Global Perspectives, Local Conversations*



# South India

## Chennai to Cochin

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14 Days / 12 Nights

### ITINERARY

<b>DAY 1</b>	Leave USA for Chennai, India.
<b>DAY 2</b>	Arrive in Chennai / Chennai.
<b>DAY 3</b>	Sightseeing in Chennai / Chennai.
<b>DAY 4</b>	Chennai - Mahabalipuram; sightseeing / Mahabalipuram.
<b>DAY 5</b>	Mahabalipuram sightseeing / Chennai.
<b>DAY 6</b>	Trichy sightseeing - Tanjore / Tanjore.
<b>DAY 7</b>	Tanjore sightseeing / Tanjore.
<b>DAY 8</b>	Tanjore - Chettinadu - Madurai / Madurai.
<b>DAY 9</b>	Madurai sightseeing / Madurai.
<b>DAY 10</b>	Madurai - Thekkady; sightseeing / Thekkady.
<b>DAY 11</b>	Thekkady - Kumarakom - Lunch cruise / Kumarakom.
<b>DAY 12</b>	Kumarakom - Cochin; sightseeing / Cochin.
<b>DAY 13</b>	Cochin sightseeing / Cochin
<b>DAY 14</b>	Departure.



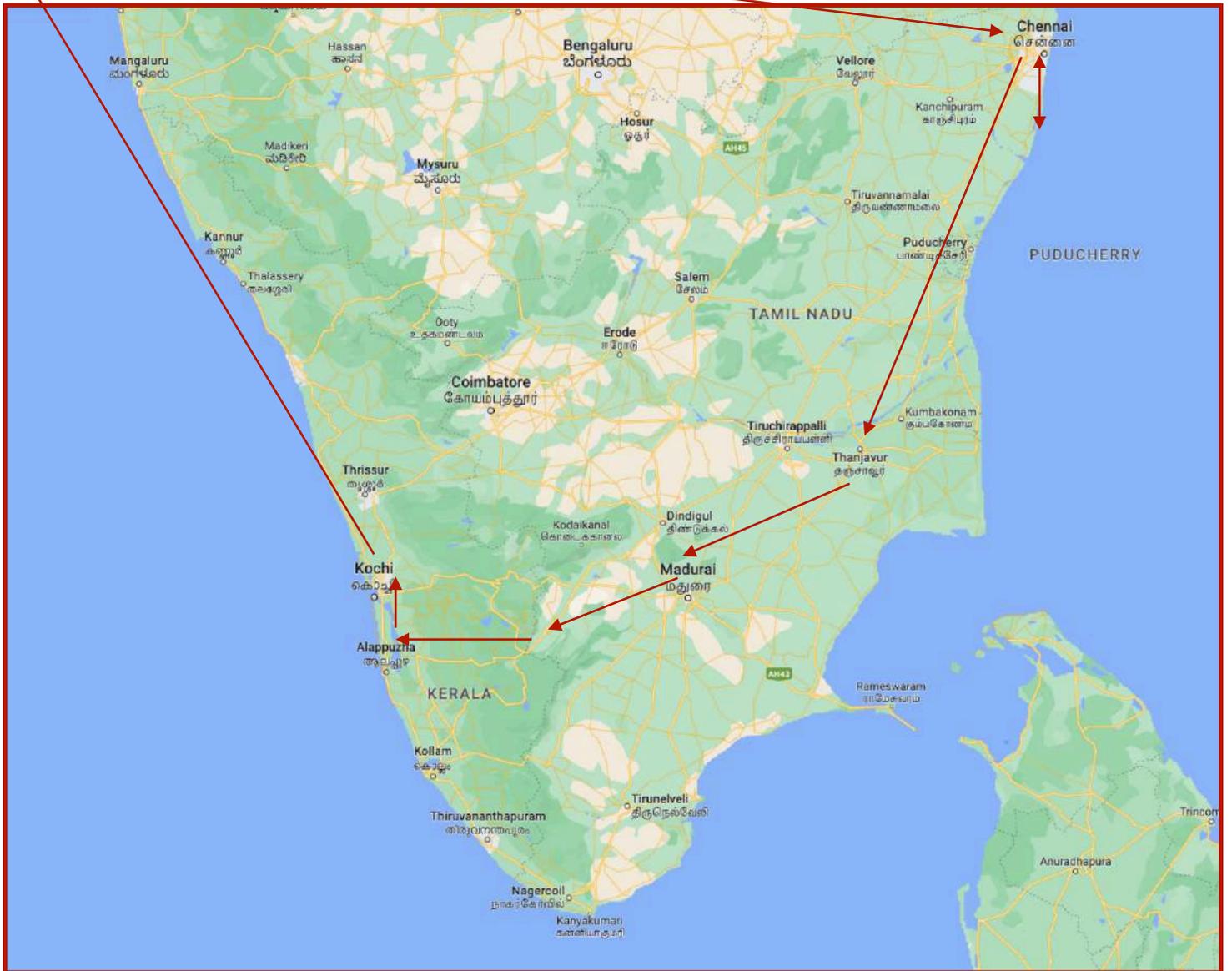
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### MAP TRAJECTORY



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## HIGHLIGHTS

**Chennai (Madras); Britain's first bastion in India.**

**Bay of Bengal.**

**Kanchipuram, center for silk saris.**

**Rock cut temples of Mahabalipuram.**

**Sacred island of Srirangam.**

**Sri Ranganatha Temple complex - one of the largest in Tamil Nadu.**

**Granite temple of Brihadishvara from 11th century.**

**Ornate mansions of Chettinadu.**

**Thirumalai Nayaka Palace & Gandhi Museum in Madurai.**

**Minakshi Temple complex in Madurai.**

**Boat ride in Periyar National Park.**

**Visit a spice plantation in Kerala.**

**Kalaripattayu martial art show.**

**Kumarakom bird sanctuary and tea gardens.**

**Lunch at a rubber plantation.**

**Sunset cruise on Lake Vembanad.**

**Houseboats of Kumakarom.**

**Performances in Kerala Folklore Theater in Cochin.**

**Delicious food of South India.**



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## INCLUDED

Visa fee

All accommodations based on double occupancy in hotels as listed.

Meals as listed with bottled water.

Bottled water on the bus.

Transportation in a deluxe motor-coach with air-conditioning.

Arrival & departure transfers - for suggested flights only.

All sightseeing, excursions and entrances as listed.

One domestic flight in India.

English speaking professional guide throughout the tour.

Tips for meals and hotels.

Gratuities for guides and drivers.

Trip photo book following return home.

## NOT INCLUDED

International airfare.

Any drinks other than tea/coffee for breakfast and water for meals.

Photo/video camera charges for some sites.

Excess luggage charges.

Travel insurance.

Any items not listed.

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### **SUGGESTED FLIGHTS:**

**Suggested flights are on Emirates:**

**17 February Houston to Dubai**

**EK 212      dep: 7:10 pm / arr: 7:45 pm on 18 February**

**18 February Dubai to Chennai**

**EK 542      dep: 9:00 pm / arr: 2:15 am on 19 February**

**02 March      Cochin to Dubai**

**EK 533      dep: 4:30 am / arr: 7:05 am**

**02 March      Dubai to Houston**

**EK 211      dep: 10:05 am / arr: 4:40 pm**

**Economy class fare \$1952**

**Business class fare \$7587**

**per person including taxes, surcharges and fees as of August 24, 2022. Fares can change based on availability.**



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## PROGRAM DETAILS

<b>DAY 1</b>	<b>Fri, February 17 - USA to Chennai</b>
	We will leave USA for Chennai, India.
<b>DAY 2</b>	<b>Sat, February 18 - Arrival in Chennai</b>
	Upon arrival, our guide will greet us at the airport and take us to our hotel in Chennai.
	<b>Overnight in Chennai</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Meals: None</b></span>

**Chennai**, formerly known as Madras, is the capital city of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the cradle of ancient Dravidian culture. Tamil Nadu has some of India's most magnificent ancient temples, still active centers of religious practice. The region has been an important administrative, military and economic center since 1st century. The Portuguese arrived in 1522 and built a port. Then Dutch settled in the north of the city in 1612. British East India Company was granted land in 1639. Chennai, a modern capital with the appearance of a gracious garden city, is the fourth largest metropolis in India.



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### DAY 3

#### Sun, February 19 - Chennai

We will make a late start to get some rest and to get rid of our jet lag.

Then, our program in Chennai starts:

We will visit Britain's first bastion in India, Fort St. George, which was the East India Company's principal settlement until 1774 and the Fort Museum which houses the colonial memorabilia.

After a visit to the Archaeological Section and the Bronze Gallery of the Government Museum, we'll continue with the Vivekananda House which houses a technologically smart museum called "Experience Vivekananda" on Indian culture, Swami Vivekananda's life and his message using latest trends like Virtual and Augmented Reality, modern 3D/4D effects and advanced Son et Lumiere elements.

We won't miss the Marina Beach, a natural urban beach along the Bay of Bengal. The beach runs from near Fort St. George in the north to Foreshore Estate in the south, a distance of 3.7 miles, making it the second longest urban beach in the world. Observing the daily beach activities of the locals is so much fun.

After a visit to St. Thomas Church, we'll see Kapaleeshwarar Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva and its surroundings.

**Overnight in Chennai**

**Meals B-L-D**

**Fort St. George**, is located on the banks of the Bay of Bengal. It was established as the East India Company's fortified foothold in Madras and the small trading post that British influence spread throughout India. The establishment of Fort St. George marked the birth of the new city that is Madras, in the year 1640. The fort was named after St George who is believed to have preached in the region.

**Kapaleeswarar Temple** is one of Chennai's oldest and best-known temples. It dates to the 8th century, although the present structure dates to the 1600s. Notable above all for its soaring, incredibly detailed 123 ft gopuram (entrance gate). There is a large water tank behind the temple, used for the Thaipusam festival, and plenty of flower shops around.



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### DAY 4

#### Mon, February 20 - Chennai - Mahabalipuram

Very early in the morning, before the breakfast, there'll be an optional visit to the flower market for the ones who are interested in seeing the local life.

After breakfast we'll drive to the small temple town of Kanchipuram, or Kanchi, one of the seven sacred cities of the Hindus. From the 6th to 8th centuries, it was the capital of Pallavas, who built numerous temples and founded universities here. Kanchi is sacred to the devotees of Shiva as well as Vishnu.

We'll visit Ekambareswarar and Kailasanathar Temples, both dedicated to Shiva. Kanchipuram is also a famous center for silk. The silk fabric and saris created by the city's weavers and dyers are ritually offered to the gods before being sold. We'll see these famous saris at the famous Kanjivaram Silk Saree Workshop.

Then we will drive to Mahabalipuram for overnight.

**Overnight in Mahabalipuram**

**Meals B-L-D**



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## DAY 5

### Tue, February 21 - Mahabalipuram - Chennai

Our day in Mahabalipuram will start visiting the spectacular Shore Temple, built by Mamalla for Vishnu. Then we will continue our visits with the celebrated bas-relief, Bhagiratha's Penance, Krishna's Butter Ball, a natural boulder perched on a slope, the small Archaeological Museum and Varaha Cave Temple.

We will drive south to see the Panch (five) Rathas (processional temple chariots). This 7th century complex of monolithic rock-cut shrines are named after the five Pandava brothers, heroes of the epic Mahabharata and their queen Draupadi. Although unfinished, these impressive temples are a tribute to the genius of the stone-cutters who carved these large boulders in situ.

After our visits, we will drive back to Chennai for overnight.

**Overnight in Chennai**

**Meals B-L-D**

**Mahabalipuram**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site was once a major port-city, built in the 7th century by the Pallava king, Mamalla, the "Great Wrestler". The spectacular site is situated on the Bay of Bengal and comprises rock-cut caves and monolithic shrines, structural temples and huge bas-reliefs that are considered the greatest examples of Pallava art. After its founder, the city is also called Mamallapuram.



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## DAY 6

### Wed, February 22 - Chennai - Trichy - Tanjore

After an early breakfast, we will drive to the airport and fly to Trichy (Tiruchirapalli), the city which was named after the fierce three-headed demon (tirusira) who attained salvation after being slain by Shiva.

Then we'll drive to Tanjore visiting Srirangam Island on the way. This sacred 2-miles long island was formed by the Kaveri and Kollidam Rivers. We'll observe the religious rituals by the river and visit Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, dedicated to Vishnu. Covering an area of 148 acres, it's one of the largest temple complexes of Tamil Nadu.

Overnight in Tanjore

Meals B-L-D

The city of **Tanjore** (Thanjavur) lies in the fertile Kaveri Delta, a region often referred to as the "rice bowl of Tamil Nadu". For nearly a thousand years, this great town dominated the political history of the region as the capital of three dynasties, the Cholas (9th -13th centuries), the Nayakas (1535-1676) and the Marathas (1676-1855).

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## DAY 7

### Thu, February 23 - Tanjore

In the morning we'll visit Airavatesvara Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage monument in Dharasuram.

After lunch, we'll visit the magnificent granite temple of Brihadishvara, another UNESCO World Heritage monument, completed in 1010 and dedicated to Shiva.

Then we'll continue to the Maratha Royal Palace from the Nayaka and Maratha periods.

We will also visit the Art Gallery, which hosts a large collection of beautiful Chola sculptures and bronze statues from the 9th to 18th centuries.

Overnight in Tanjore

Meals B-L-D

**Airavateshwara Temple:** Located in Darasuram, the Airavateswara temple is one of the many Shiva temples in Thanjavur. As the legend goes, the white elephant of Lord Shiva who is known as Airavata, worshipped Lord Shiva here to get rid of a curse given to him by Sage Durvasa. It is also said that the lord of death, Yama, worshipped Shiva here as well. Along with the other temples in Thanjavur, this temple is considered one of the greatest living Chola temples.

**Brihadishvara Temple** is one of the most important landmarks of the city and was built by Raja Raja Chola-I and is known as the most intricate example of the South Indian temple architecture. It is a world heritage site and is said to have been constructed as a celebration of the victory of the Chola Kingdom. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the architecture of the temple is truly one of a kind as hundreds of lingams are carved onto the stone structure. The temple is surrounded by gardens.



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### DAY 8

### Fri, February 24 - Tanjore - Madurai

We will drive to Madurai, visiting Chettinadu on the way and have an example of the traditional Chettinad lunch at Karaikudi en route.

The arid region encompassing the towns of Karaikudi, Devakottai and their neighboring villages, collectively known as Chettinad, is distinguished by large ornate mansions which are the ancestral homes of the Chettiars, Tamil Nadu's wealthy merchant community. The highlights will be the Old Market, Athangudi Tiles Workshop and the Chettinadu Palace.

After our special lunch in Karaikudi, we will continue to Madurai.

**Overnight in Madurai**

**Meals B-L-D**

**Madurai** is the third largest city in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Located on the banks of the river Vaigai, Madurai has been a major settlement for two millennia and is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. This city was the capital of the Pandyan kingdom - initially at Korkai, around 600 BCE and later moved to Koodal (the present Madurai) during the reign of Nedunj Cheliyan I. Madurai is famous for its temples built by Pandyan and Madurai Nayak kings in the Dravidian style of architecture. It is also one of India's most outstanding Hindu pilgrimage centers.



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### DAY 9

#### Sat, February 25 - Madurai

This ancient city on the banks of the Vaigai River has, over the centuries, been a rich repository of Tamil culture. Some 2000 years ago, it hosted the famous Sangams (gatherings of writers and poets), which were to provide Tamil literature with some of its most enduring works. Today the religion and culture remain a vibrant part of the city's daily life.

Madurai is synonymous with the celebrated Minakshi Temple. This enormous temple complex is dedicated to Shiva, known here as Sundareshvara (the “Handsome God”), his consort Parvati and Minakshi (the “Fish-eyed Goddess”). Originally built by the early Pandyas (7th - 10th centuries), it was extensively expanded by succeeding dynasties. The temple complex is within a high-walled enclosure, at the core of which are the two sanctums for Minakshi and Sundareshvara, surrounded by a number of smaller shrines and pillared halls. Especially impressive are the 12 gopuras (pyramidal gates). Their soaring towers rise from solid granite bases, and are covered with stucco figures of deities, mythical animals and monsters, painted in vivid colors.

Today we'll also see the Thirumalai Nayaka Palace, a 17th-century palace erected in 1636 CE by King Tirumala Nayaka, a king of Madurai's Nayaka dynasty who ruled Madurai from 1623 to 1659. It's a classic fusion of Italian and Rajput styles.

Gandhi Memorial Museum is also in our program today. The building that houses the museum is the historic Tamukkam Palace belonging to Rani Mangammal of Nayak Dynasty built about 1670 A.D. The Museum contains a 'Visual Biography of Bapuji' containing photos, paintings, sculptures, manuscripts, quotations and some of the selected xerox copies of many of the letters written by him.

**Overnight in Madurai**

**Meals B-L-D**



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### DAY 10

#### Sun, February 26 - Madurai - Thekkady

Today, we will drive to Thekkady and visit a spice plantation and breathe in the exotic aroma of spices such as pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric, curry leaf, cloves, nutmeg, vanilla, oregano, rosemary, thyme, basil, mint, bay leaf and sage.

Before dinner, we'll see a Kalaripayattu show. Kalaripayattu is a martial art designed for the ancient battlefield (the word "Kalari" meaning "battlefield"), with weapons and combative techniques that are unique to Kerala. Like most Indian martial arts, Kalaripayattu contains rituals and philosophies inspired by Hinduism.

Overnight in Thekkady

Meals B-L-D

Nestling between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, **Kerala** is an enchanting mosaic of coconut groves and paddy fields, wide beaches and labyrinthine backwaters, verdant hills and rainforests. This politically conscious state, where power alternates between Left and Centrist parties, boasts the highest literacy rate in India. Many of its people work in the Middle East, their remittances home adding greatly to Kerala's prosperity.

Set on an attractive lakeside, formed by the building of Mullaperiyar Dam in 1895, Periyar is South India's most popular wildlife sanctuary. Approximately 75% of the entire protected area are covered of rain forest. Spices of Kerala hold a major part of the Indian economy. They are not just aromatic in nature and used in everyday cooking but also used for medicinal purposes. Kerala was known as the spice capital of the world in ancient times.



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### DAY 11

#### Mon, February 27 - Thekkady - Kumarakom

After breakfast, we will drive to Kumarakom, known for backwaters, huge Vembanad Lake and Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary.

En route, we will visit tea gardens around the Franciscan Catholic Church and a rubber plantation. Even though not a native plant, more than 90% of rubber produced in India is from Kerala region. In the plantation, along with the rubber plants, there are also other plants such as areca and cashew nuts. Pineapple is planted as an intercrop in most plantations.

We'll continue to Alleppey to get on our boat to take a late lunch cruise on the Vembanad Lake through the Backwaters of Kerala. The boats, kettuvalams, are also known as the rice barges or "houseboats". We will cruise around the beautiful backwaters of Kumarakom and Alleppey to observe and experience the daily life of the villagers as well as to relax and enjoy the breathtaking views along the backwaters.

Then we will check into our resort in Kumarakom.

**Overnight in Kumarakom**

**Meals B-L-D**



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### DAY 12

#### Tue, February 28 - Kumarakom - Cochin

We will drive to Cochin, Kerala's most cosmopolitan city, which is also its main trading center for spices and seafood. Built around a saltwater lagoon of the Arabian Sea, Cochin, also known as Kochi, is in fact a collection of narrow islands and peninsulas. Cochin was the center of Indian spice trade for many centuries, and was known to Greeks, as well as to Romans, Jews, Arabs and Chinese since ancient times.

Upon arrival, we'll have lunch and then we'll visit the Folklore Museum in the city of Thevara in Cochin. This unique museum is the best example of the traditional Kerala architecture, made of wood, laterite stone and clay tiles. Museum occupies the largest ethnic collections of more than 6000 art works.

Before dinner, we'll witness a Kathakali performance (one of the oldest form of dance drama) at a local theater.

**Overnight in Cochin**

**Meals B-L-D**

**'Kathakali'**, an important genre in the Indian classical dance form, is associated with storytelling form of this art. It is the dance drama from the south Indian state of Kerala. Similar to other Indian classical dance arts, the story in 'Kathakali' is also communicated to audience through excellent footwork and impressive gestures of face and hands complimented with music and vocal performance. However it can be distinguished from the others through the intricate and vivid make-up, unique face masks and costumes worn by dancers as also from their style and movements that reflect the age-old martial arts and athletic conventions prevalent in Kerala and surrounding regions. Traditionally performed by male dancers, it developed in courts and theaters of Hindu regions contrary to other Indian classical dances which predominantly developed in Hindu temples and monastic schools. Although not clearly traceable, this classical dance form is considered to have originated from temple and folk arts that trace back to 1st millennium CE or before.



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### DAY 13

#### Wed, March 1 - Cochin

On our last day in Cochin, we'll enjoy the highlights of Fort Cochin, a charming seaside area which is known for its Dutch, Portuguese, and British colonial architecture, and elaborate bamboo fishing nets at Fort Kochi Beach.

St. Francis Church was the original burial site of explorer Vasco da Gama. Upscale eateries and chic cafes serve Keralan specialties, and quaint shops sell cotton clothing and handmade souvenirs. Heritage buildings house contemporary art galleries.

We'll visit the Jew Town, Paradesi Synagogue, St. Francis CSI Church, Dutch Palace, Chinese Fishing Nets and Kochi International Pepper Exchange at Fort Cochin.

After lunch, we'll have leisure time to enjoy this beautiful seaside city on our own.

We'll have our farewell dinner tonight.

**Overnight in Cochin**

**Meals B-L-D**



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### DAY 14

#### Thu, March 2 - Departure

Depending on our flight time, we will be transferred to the airport for our return flight.

**Meals B**

#### Contact Us

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