EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Southern Indian Images (DS 2015)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOURDURAT
14
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Busy

Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard

tour Code: DS

Tour Highlights - Southern Indian Images

- ✓ Mysore - Visit the Maharajah's Palace, one of the largest palaces in India
- ✓ Ooty – Enjoy the cool climate of this hill station town
- ✓ Madurai - Wind your way through 1000 ornately carved pillars in the Meenakshi Temple
- ✓ Kochi - Explore the Portuguese influenced city by boat
- ✓ Mamallapuram - Relax on the tropical beaches of the Bay of Bengal

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	5 nights Comfortable Hotel 7 nights Standard Hotel 1 night Simple Boat
Included Meals:	13 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 dinner
Start Point:	Join tour: Bangalore Airport
End Point:	Tour ends: Chennai Airport
Transport:	Rickshaw, Bus, Train, Boat, Taxi
Countries:	India

South Indian Images

Take a cultural journey with us across this colourful landscape, from intricately carved temple complexes to lush jungle backwaters and historic harbour ports. By train, bus and riverboat we climb to the heights of the Western Ghats and drop down to the Bay of Bengal in the Indian Ocean. This fast-paced adventure includes a little bit of everything southern India has to offer.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

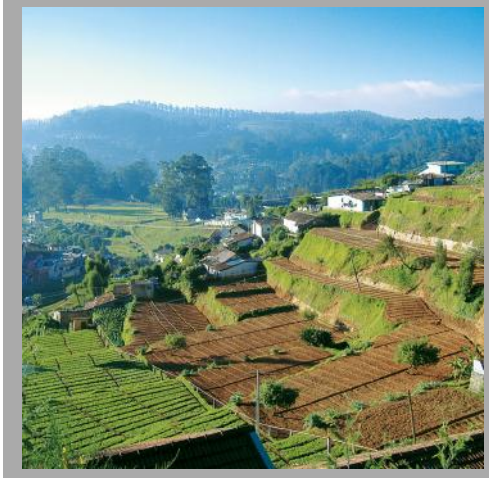
Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Busy

There may be early starts, long journeys and tiring days along the way, but you'll return home feeling you've really experienced as much as you possibly could.



Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour at Bangalore Airport, drive to Mysore

Our tour begins today at Bangalore Airport. After meeting in the arrivals hall we leave the airport and drive to Mysore.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Discover Mysore Palace

Mysore offers the interested traveller a great deal including the huge Maharajah's Palace. Originally built in the 14th century, the palace has undergone two subsequent re-buildings and is today an opulent mélange of Hindu and British architecture. This morning we visit the Maharajah's Palace and also see the enormous monolithic sculpture of the sacred bull Nandi standing halfway up the Chamundi Hill. The rest of the day is left free to explore at your own pace. You may wish to visit the Srirangapatnam Palace outside the city or see the historic art gallery in Jaganmohan Palace. In spring, the scent of jasmine fills the air, making Mysore a city of true oriental splendour.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Take a game drive in Bandipur National Park

Leaving the city today we drive to nearby Bandipur National Park. The park is home to a variety of animals such as the chital (spotted deer), monkeys, mongoose, panther and the gaur - the Indian bison. The park's elephant population is one of the largest in the country and we may see some of them working in the forest. We take a game drive this afternoon before spending the night at a lodge on the outskirts of the park.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Morning game drive before driving to Ooty

An early start today as we take a second game drive in to Bandipur. After returning to our lodge for breakfast and a freshen up we drive to Udhagamandalam, better known as Ooty. The most famous of all South India's hill stations, Ooty (2270m) was first adopted by the British then by wealthy Maharajas, earning itself a reputation as Snooty Ooty.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Take a walking tour in the famous hill station

We take a walking tour of the town this morning and the afternoon is left free to visit the Botanical Gardens, St Stephen's Church or Ooty Lake. You may like to play golf at the Ooty Golf Club or take a walk up to Dodabetta Peak for some stunning views, or perhaps visit a local tea factory. There may also be the option to take a guided walk with a visit to a tribal village with a local guide.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Travel on the Toy Train. Drive to Kochi

After breakfast we take a ride on the famous Toy Train to Coonoor. Whilst traditionally the Toy Train was pulled by steam engines these days they are mostly pulled by diesel engines. It is not unknown for the Toy Train to be out of service due to maintenance or due to poor track conditions, if this is the case we will transfer to Coonoor by bus. We then transfer to the coastal city of Kochi.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Explore Fort Kochi and the Jewish Quarter

Kochi has been a gathering place of merchants since antiquity and is full of bustling traders. Fort Kochi is the oldest European settlement in India (1500), and has a mixture of English, Dutch and Portuguese influences. The Mattancherry Palace was built by the Portuguese in the 16th century, but extensive renovations by the Dutch some hundred years later earned it the name the Dutch Palace. It has some of the best murals in India, depicting scenes from the Ramayana and other great legends. We will take a tour by

river-craft to Fort Kochi, passing Bolgatty Island and seeing the cantilevered Chinese Fishing nets. We also visit St Francis Church and the Jewish Synagogue. The afternoon is left free for personal exploration.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Spend the night on a houseboat in the backwaters

Today we can see the most beautiful stretch of inland waterways in Kerala – over 80km of Malabar backwaters winding under the lush leaves of coconut palms. We board our houseboat for an exotic journey, chugging in unhurried style on waterways used by villagers commuting from village to village. The people are a colourful mix of high born Nayas, traditionally inheriting property through the mother; Brahmins, once priests but now mainly professional workers; Dravidians, speaking their own language and Christians, Jews, Muslims and Chinese – an attractive, friendly melée of different types, often looking somewhat incongruous with their black umbrellas to ward off the tropical sun. Keep an eye open for the rich variety of birdlife along the waters edge. We dock in the middle of the waterways and relax as we watch the sun go down.

Overnight: **Simple Boat**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 9 Travel to Thekkady

After spending the morning drifting through the backwaters we disembark and drive to Thekkady. En route if we have time we may stop at one of the nearby colourful markets.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10 Visit a spice garden en route to Madurai

After breakfast we take a visit to a nearby spice plantation. After learning a little about how the spices are grown and processed we drive to Madurai. The drive will take us nearly six hours but we will make plenty of stops along the way.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11 Discover the ornate Meenakshi Temple

Today we have a morning tour of Madurai including a visit to the 16th century Meenakshi Temple with its nine imposing gopurams (monumental gates). Within the temple complex we'll explore the Thousand Pillared Hall, the Golden Lotus Tank and the Nandi Pavilion. Rising above the temple, above the festive pandemonium of swirling crowds of pilgrims that never seem to cease, are 12 stupendous towers. A short distance away is the Tirumalai Nayaka Palace, a blend of Hindu and Saracen architectural styles. Recent restorations include repainting the carvings and stone-work in their original colours - a startling effect. This afternoon you are free to explore this bustling temple town at leisure, taking in a trip to the Gandhi Museum, soaking up the vibrant colours and floral aromas. browsing through silver, craft and carpet shops or even ordering tailor-made outfits from one of the many bazaars.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12 Take a train to Chennai then drive to Mamallapuram

We travel to Chennai by train today and from here we will drive onto Mamallapuram on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. This was the chief harbour for the Pallavas Kingdom some 1200 years ago and many examples of masterful carvings from those days still exist in the so-called pagodas (actually 'rathas'). Mamallapuram offers us the ideal opportunity to relax after our journey. The area is well known for its many beautiful temples and miles of beaches, perfect for an evening stroll or beachcombing

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13 Explore Mamallapuram's shore temples

Today we will take a tour with a local guide. We will see the World Heritage listed Shore Temple, built in 7th century and Ajuna's Penance, the world's largest bas relief (some 27m long by 9m high) and one of the most impressive friezes in India. Although both are quite weather-beaten, a remarkable amount of detailed carving still remains. We will also see the Mandapa Cave temples with interesting reliefs and the Five Rathas, monolithic temples sculptured out of the rock in the mid-7th century.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14 Tour ends at Chennai Airport

Our tour ends this morning at Chennai Airport.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

Accommodation in India is as varied as the country itself. On our tours we stay in a mix of hotels, heritage properties, camp sites and homestays. Standards do not equate to standards in the UK and it's best to approach each type of accommodation with an open mind. Service can be slow in places especially when travelling with a group. For the most part hotels do not have heating so in the winter months it can be chilly and if you feel the cold you may wish to ask for extra blankets. Hot water is not always available 24 hours a day in some of the smaller properties, and with a group staying you might find if you are showering last you may miss out on the hottest water.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 13 breakfasts, 1 lunch,1 dinner included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

India

Lunch £: 6.00

Dinner £: 8.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

India

Bottle of Beer £: 1.40

Water £: .50

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Thekkady - Spice plantation £5 (Including transport)
Kochi - Traditional Kathakali Dancing £3.00.
Udhagamandalam - Tea Factory £2.00; guided walk to tribal village £7.00.

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.
Accordingly, you should allow £30 for tipping.

Foreign Exchange

India

ATM Availability: ATMs are available in most large cities in India but they are very limited elsewhere so please do not rely on this.

Credit Card Acceptance: Very rarely, only in the larger outlets.

Travellers Cheques: Opportunities to exchange are limited.

Local Currency: Indian Rupee

Recommended Currency for Exchange: GBP/US$ are the best currency to change into local currency.

Where to Exchange: The Indian rupee is a restricted currency and it is best not to obtain in the UK as rates are very poor. You can either change money at the airport on arrival or in major towns during the tour. Your Tour Leader will advise you on the best places in each town.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not

mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited. who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Visa Information

India: A single entry visa is required by British travellers to India and must be obtained prior to departure.

Please note, from the 14th March 2015, all British Indian-visa applicants must be present at an Indian Visa & Consular Service Centre on the day of application to provide biometric information (fingerprint data and facial imagery). It is not possible to obtain an Indian visa directly from the Embassy. Therefore, Indian visas should be applied for through VFS global and further details of the new visa process and location of the application centres can be found here http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/visa_types.html . Our recommended visa service; Visaswift, can also offer assistance and advice at http://www.visaswift.com/explore.aspx . Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

India

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria (eg. Paludrine, Chloroquine, Mefloquine etc.). The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

India

There is considerable variation between the different regions of India but, in general, the climate is tropical. Summer temperatures on the plains are very hot, but cooled by the South-West Monsoon, which lasts from June- September. During these months it can be very wet and therefore very humid. At altitude, temperatures can become quite cool at night even in the summer and may drop below freezing between December and February so warm clothing is necessary. In the winter, northern and mid India can be very cool, with cold evenings, so warm clothing, including plenty of layers, are essential. The south of India remains warm and sunny during the winter months.

Clothing

Bear in mind that the area is tropical with high humidity. Light weight clothing is needed all year round with some warmer clothes for cooler evenings, particularly in winter (November-March) in the Nilgiri Hills. Due to the high chance of rain between October and December, it is advisable to take a rain jacket or umbrella during this time. Casual clothes are the most practical: tight fitting garments, brief shorts and skirts should be avoided, since they attract unwelcome attention. Shoes must be taken off for temple visits and you must always cover up arms and legs when going inside. You may want to take an old pair of socks to the temples as the floor can get very hot and difficult to walk on.

Equipment

A torch is useful in case of powercuts/ emergencies.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes and sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysac. Remember hotel porters are not always available, so don't overload yourself. Soft bags are preferable.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

Transport

In order to make reservations on Indian trains we require your full passport details. It is important that we receive these details as soon as possible so we are ready to make the arrangements as soon as train tickets are available to buy.

Travelling on an Indian train is a fantastic experience, with millions using the rail network every day it is the perfect opportunity

to meet local families. Due to the system for booking train tickets in India, whilst we'll try to ensure groups are as close together as possible, it may not be possible to have customers sat together in the same carriages. In such cases our Tour Leaders will help everyone to find their seats and ensure you get the most out of your journey.

General Information

Country details

India

Population: 1,210,193,422

Size of Country: 3,287,263 sq km

Major Language: Hindi and English.

Religion: Catholicism, Hindu, Muslim and Sikhism

Time Difference to GMT: +5

Electric Supply & Plugs

India

3 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety andÂ security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. ForÂ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link atÂ http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is ‘Available’ or ‘Guaranteed’ we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

These tour notes were printed on 22/05/2015 17:01:50