

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Backroads of Kerala (CKB 2017 18)



TRIPDURATION
13
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Tour Type: Small Groups
Cycling Grade: Easy

Trip Code: CKB

Trip Highlights - Backroads of Kerala

- ✓ Backroad cycling - Pedal along beautiful coastlines, through tea and spice plantations and tropical forests
- ✓ Backwaters Homestay - Stay in traditional village houses with local families
- ✓ Cochin - Explore this fascinating colonial coastal town
- ✓ Kovalam - Relax on the stunning beaches of the Arabian Sea

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 8 nights Standard Hotel
4 nights Simple Homestay

Included Meals: 12 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 4 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Kovalam
End Point: Trip ends: Kochi

Included Bike: 21 or 24 gear Trek or Merida mountain bikes with lockable front suspension

Transport: Bus, Boat, Bicycle

Countries: India

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Backroads Of Kerala

On this cycling tour of southern India we travel into Kerala's rural backwaters. We ride inland through a landscape of spice, tea and rubber plantations. We also travel along the waterways in wooden canoes, walk through Periyar National Park in search of wildlife and relax on Indian Ocean beaches. Staying in family houses we also enjoy warm Keralan hospitality.

Why Book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

Cycling Information

On this tour we cycle 279 km over ten days (an average of 28 km per day) with further optional rides available. We avoid main roads where possible and cycle mainly on tarmac back roads (90%) and some gravel paths (10%). A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We have graded the route as easy.

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.

Accommodation Grade: 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.

Cycling Grade: Easy

Suitable for cyclists who enjoy easy and relatively short rides on flat or gently undulating terrain. Ideal if you simply want to explore a region by bike at a relaxed pace.

Your trip 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 Trip starts in Kovalam

Arriving in Kovalam today we check in to the hotel. We take this opportunity before our cycling adventure to relax and get a feel for the country. The beautiful beaches of Kovalam are a good place to enjoy a drink from the numerous cafes overlooking the sandy beach.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Morning cycle ride, afternoon free to relax on the Arabian coast

This morning we try out our bikes and make any necessary adjustments. We start with a short and relaxing introductory ride through some of the local fisherman's villages around Kovalam. In the afternoon you may like to explore the area at leisure; walk along the sandy beaches or take on the pounding surf of the Arabian Sea. In the evening you can sit in a beachside cafe, enjoying the vista of fishing boats sailing out for their evening catch with a backdrop of the setting sun. Kerala is particularly renowned for its herbal care, and you may choose to have an Ayurvedic massage. The science of rejuvenation and purification through natural remedies, the massage uses a range of oils and herbs to treat a number of ailments. There is the option to extend your ride today up to 35 kms passing through fishing villages and along a beautiful coastal road. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 12 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Drive to Veli Lagoon; visit Anjengo Fort and cycle to Varkala

After breakfast we transfer by bus to Veli, from where we cycle 20 km to the estuary. The lagoon is a large lake separated from the ocean by the narrowest of sandbar spits, where fisherman can be seen working on their boats and nets, or poling across the lake with sand-filled barges. We visit the fishing village of Anjuthengu, where we stop to visit Anjengo Fort, built by the British East India Company in the 17th century and the first British trading post on the Malabar coast. After our visit we carry on towards Varkala, a temple town renowned throughout the region as a pilgrimage centre for the millions of Hindus who come here to worship at the ancient Janardhana Swamy Temple. Nowadays Varkala has grown into Kerala's most popular backpacker hangout with people attracted to the naturally beautiful clifftop setting and relaxed vibe. On arrival there should be time to relax on the beaches of the Arabian coast, wander amongst the palms and perhaps enjoy a stunning sunset before sitting down to a well-earned dinner in one of the local restaurants. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 36 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Cycle through traditional Keralan villages to Kollam

This morning's ride is alongside palm fringed shores and beautiful blue lagoons. Travelling through villages we may have the chance to see some traditional coir-making skills (the fibres from the outer husk of the coconut, which is used to make rope and mats), as well as fishing. Situated on the edge of the Ashtamundi Lake, Kollam is surrounded by coconut palms and cashew tree plantations, indeed the town is the centre of the cashew industry here. Its old wooden houses are typical of the Keralan style and its situation at the southern end of the backwaters makes it an ideal spot from which to explore the network of canals and lagoons. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 36 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 Boat trip along Backwaters; cycle to Mancombu

After a short drive to Kollam jetty we get back on the bikes and cycle further south along coastal roads shaded by palm trees for about 18 kms. We cross a river by ferry that acts as a water taxi for the locals with their motorbikes or bicycles. Our ride continues for about 22 kms which completes today's cycling. We then travel by bus to visit the Manarasala Snake Temple, located close to the settlement of Thottapally. After visiting the temple we can have a traditional lunch cooked in a family run restaurant and served on a banana leaf. We then spend the afternoon on a relaxing exploration through the backwaters by motor launch that leads us to our homestay. The journey should take around 3 hours and is the ideal way to explore these waterways, which cover an area of some 1900 square kilometres. The boats are the lifeline for the villages, acting as taxis, mail delivery and even the harvest is carried in boats. You may see great pyramids of coconuts or even the odd buffalo being carried along in this time honoured fashion. Our boat trips ends and we proceed to our accommodation, in the district of the ancient trading town of Alleppey. We stay tonight at traditional rural village

homes set in lush countryside. Staying with a local family allows us to experience the typical lifestyle and cuisine of Kerala. Most houses have guest rooms within the main home, each with a private guest bathroom. A few homes have a separate guest annexe. The rooms are simply furnished, with twin or double beds. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 40 kilometres.


Overnight: **Simple Homestay**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6 Morning cycling through Backwaters' villages; sunset canoe trip

Today we spend the morning exploring our immediate surroundings. Cycling through the villages of these myriad backwaters we get plenty of opportunity to interact with the locals, visit churches and temples, before returning to take a sunset or moonlit cruise by canoe. Crafted out of Anjili wood, we take to the waters whilst locals sing traditional songs as they row. The industrious villagers survive on narrow spits of land, keeping cows, pigs, chickens and cultivating vegetable gardens. Even the shells from the fresh water mussels are burnt to make building lime, and coir is used for just about everything. The gardens are generally well tended often with brightly coloured flowers, such as hibiscus, that contrast sharply with the tropical greenery. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 40 kilometres.


Overnight: **Simple Homestay**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7 Drive and cycle to Erattupetta; Planters Homestay

Leaving the beautiful backwaters behind we use a combination of engine and pedal power to reach today's destination; Erattupetta. This area is famous for its rubber plantations which date back to the early 19th century. The slightly cooler climate is a welcome change from the lower levels as we cycle along rolling hills in the shade of the rubber trees. We stay with a local family, at their homestay. Watch our host to cook up a traditional curry, walk through the gardens or take a swim in natural rock pools. Planters Homestay is a spacious and comfortable two storey family mansion house, built over 50 years ago. It has bright and airy guest rooms, all en-suite. Some, but not all rooms have air conditioning. The house is surrounded by lush gardens with rubber and tropical fruit trees plus palms and tall teaks and lots of bird life. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 35 kilometres.


Overnight: **Simple Homestay**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8 Optional cycle rides available

This morning we take a stroll through a local plantation and have the chance to learn about the numerous fruits and medicinal plants. Depending on the season, we may bathe in rock pools before an optional visit to Poonjar Palace, a 900 year old residency of the Maharajah and his family which is now mostly abandoned. We can also visit the local town. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 10 kilometres.

Overnight: **Simple Homestay**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 9 Drive and cycle to Thekkady; visit plantations and tea factory

Taking the meandering roads through the high ranges today we will drive some of the steeper sections of road, before transferring to two wheels to continue our journey to Thekkady. Our cycle route is through a region called Wagamon where the cooler climate helps you through the seemingly endless tea plantations and rolling hills. Our route takes us past many rubber plantations, and through varied spice gardens. Further on, we may have the opportunity to meet local tea pickers in the plantations to help get a feel for how people live in this beautiful region before arriving at our hotel. Thekkady is the spice hub of Kerala and the town has many spice shops. The beautiful aroma in the air lets you know why this region is called the cardamom hills. Today we will also make a visit to the Connemara Tea Factory. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 32 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 10 Forest walk, explore Thekkady - Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary

Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary in Thekkady is one of 16 Project Tiger Reserves in India, with about 40 tigers living in the 777 sq km park, but as they are solitary creatures, the chances of seeing them are very slim. This morning we take a forest walk in search of other wildlife such as the star tortoise, porcupine, elephants Indian Bison, flying squirrel and numerous birds. The park itself is made up of a variety of habitats; open grasslands, deciduous, semi-evergreen and tropical forest - all of which host different animal species. The ecosystem of the tropical evergreen jungle is very interesting - the trees grow up to 40m, and the dense canopy above allows in

limited sunlight. At ground level, there are abundant ferns, orchids and airplants - plants that need little light to survive. No cycling today.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 11 Great cycle descent to Kuttikanam, drive to Kochi

This morning we have a very beautiful route to cycle, down the winding roads of Kuttikanam where you can enjoy a freewheel ride of nearly 20 kms. We continue our journey by bus (3 hours) to the bustling port of Kochi, with its beautiful natural harbor which earned it the title 'Queen of the Arabian Sea'. As well as being the oldest European settlement in India, with its mix of English, Dutch and Portuguese influences, Kochi is also home to the famous Kathakali dancers. Its origins came from traditional temple rituals and from an art form known as Koodiyattam. The dancers can take up to three hours painting their faces - the features are heavily emphasised as it is the facial expressions and co-ordinated eye movements which are important in the dance. The dances usually portray events from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, great Indian epics. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 Tour of Kochi by cycle; evening boat cruise

Today we cycle through the old town of Fort Cochin. As you might expect Kochi was founded on trade, originally with the arrival of the Chinese, Arabs and Phoenicians in the second millennium BC. Its links to Europe strengthened in the 16th century, with the arrival of the Portuguese, closely followed by the Dutch and the English. This has produced an eclectic mix of styles and influences. You can find both the oldest European church and the oldest synagogue in India amongst its winding streets and elsewhere Chinese fishing nets vie for space alongside Portuguese houses and Dutch palaces. After spending the day touring the town we take a sunset cruise around the surrounding islands. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 8 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 13 Tour ends Kochi

The tour ends in Kochi this morning. Breakfast may be available at the hotel depending on your time of departure

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Notes

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.

Gabby World Homestay, Mancombu - stay at traditional community based and eco-friendly, rural village homes set in lush countryside. Staying with a local family allows us to experience the typical lifestyle and cuisine of Kerala. Most houses have guest rooms within the main home, each with a private guest bathroom (not always en-suite). A few houses have a separate guest annexe. The rooms are simply furnished, with twin or double beds. Towels and bedding are provided.

Planters Homestay, Near Wagamon - This is a spacious and comfortable two storey family mansion house, built over 50 years ago and located in a small rural village. It has bright and airy guest rooms, all en-suite. Some, but not all rooms have air conditioning. The house is surrounded by lush gardens with rubber and tropical fruit trees plus palms and tall teaks and lots of bird life.

Please be advised that accommodation in India is as varied as the country itself. On our tours we stay in a mix of hotels, heritage properties 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: 12 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 4 dinners included in the price of this trip. 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 Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip 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 £: 0.50

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

Kochi - Kathakali dancing GBP 6.50

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 recognised 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 approx. GBP 45 for gratuities for local staff.

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 Recently new 500, 1000 and 2000 rupee notes have been brought in to circulation and as the old notes are no longer accepted there have been some cash flow issues. You don't need to worry about being given old notes as it's very easy to tell the difference, the new notes are pristine in comparison with most Indian money which is fairly tatty.

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. Both GBP and USD cash are easy to exchange at the airport and at hotels however you will be restricted to changing £60 cash at a time and it's not possible to change money at these locations using a credit or debit card.

Joining your Trip

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.

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

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>.

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 booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

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

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We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

India: Holders of passports endorsed 'British citizen' may be eligible for the e-Tourist Visa to enter India.

The visa can be applied for through the official Indian government visa website only - <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>. Please check all eligibility criteria that can be found on the website but important points are listed below -

You must be arriving into one of 24 selected entry points which can be found via the official Indian Government website link above. However, you can exit from any of the authorised immigration check posts in India.

Passports must have at least 6 months validity from the date of arrival in India and at least two blank pages for stamping. The visa application will take approximately 4 days to process.

It is valid for 60 days from the date of arrival in to India, and double entry is permitted on the e-Tourist visa. You can only obtain 2 e-visas for India in a calendar year.

The visa costs \$75. Biometric data will be collected on arrival in India.

Whilst the online form offers a relatively quick way to apply for a visa, a number of applicants have reported difficulty in completing the form. Travcour will complete the on-line visa on your behalf for a fee of £25 + the visa cost. Please contact them directly if you wish to take up this service.

If you are not eligible for the e-Tourist Visa, please refer to VFS Global to apply for your Indian visa - http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/how_to_apply.html.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on **0208 5431846**.










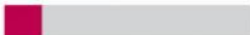
Vaccinations & Protection

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 Trip

DAILY DISTANCES

Day 2		12/35km
Day 3		36km
Day 4		36km
Day 5		40km
Day 6		40km
Day 7		35km
Day 8		10km
Day 9		32km
Day 10		
Day 11		30km
Day 12		8/65km

 Optional Rides

Bike Details

Your included bike is either a 24 or 27 gear Trek 3700 mountain bike with front suspension or 3 Merida matts-20D and 40D and will be the correct frame size for your height. A 2.5 litre handlebar bag and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

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. Lightweights are needed all year round with some warmer clothes (ie fleece and long trousers) for the cooler winter evenings (November to March) in Wagamon. When cycling: quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts and cycling gloves are strongly recommended as they will protect you from sunburn and may also help protect your hands if you fall. Bring a swimming costume for the beaches. Whilst cycling in shorts is acceptable and expected, please note that for visits to temples and city sightseeing, tight fitting sleeveless t-shirts, brief or tight shorts and miniskirts should be avoided, since they attract unwelcome attention.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling.

Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike, particularly for walking in the National Park and around Wagamon.

Luggage: On Tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

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 & tailor-made holidays.
- Award-winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of 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, 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.

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

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, 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) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

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 Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. 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 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip 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: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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