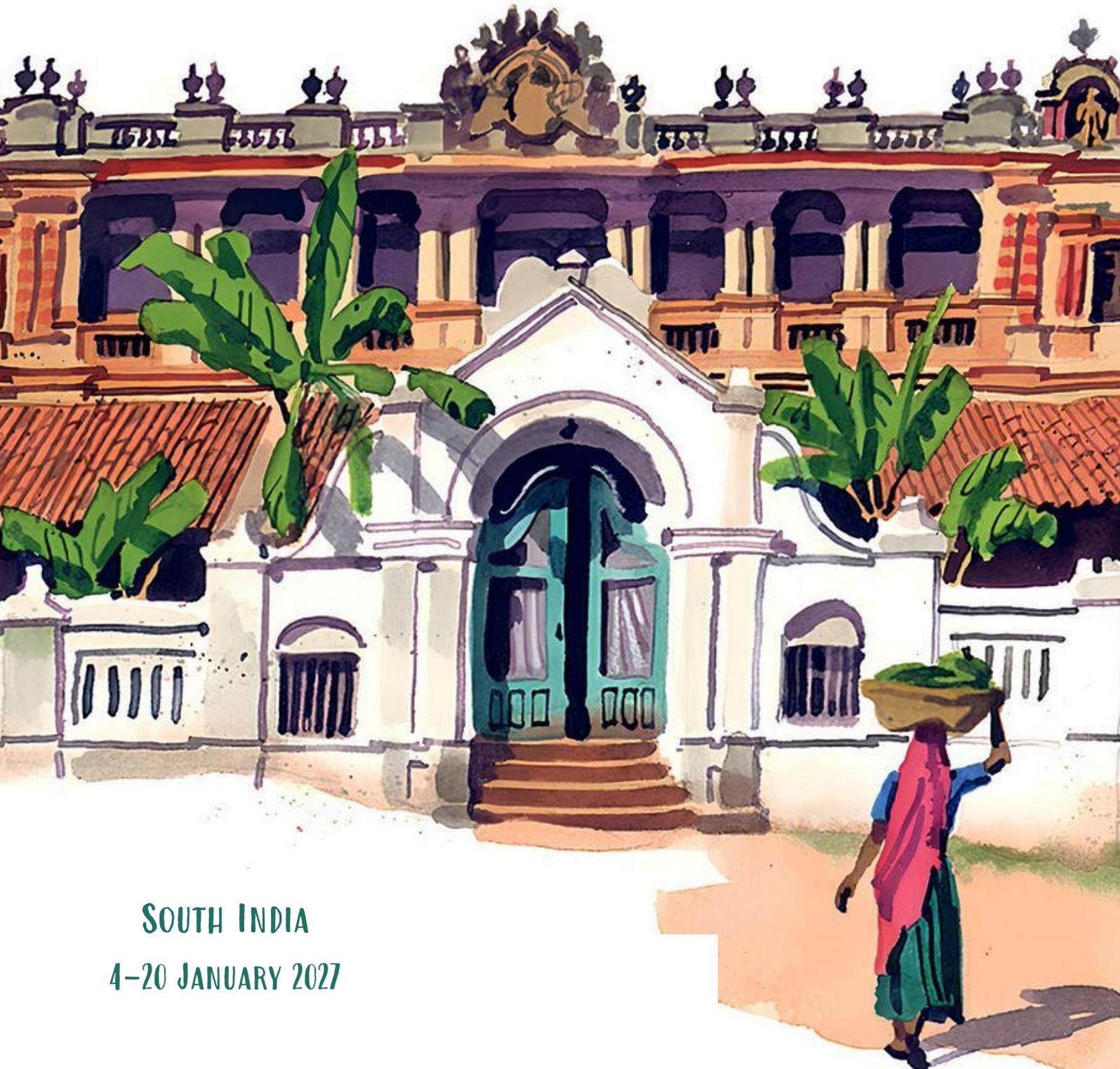


# India Design Tour

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## SMALL GROUP LUXURY JOURNEY ACROSS SOUTH INDIA

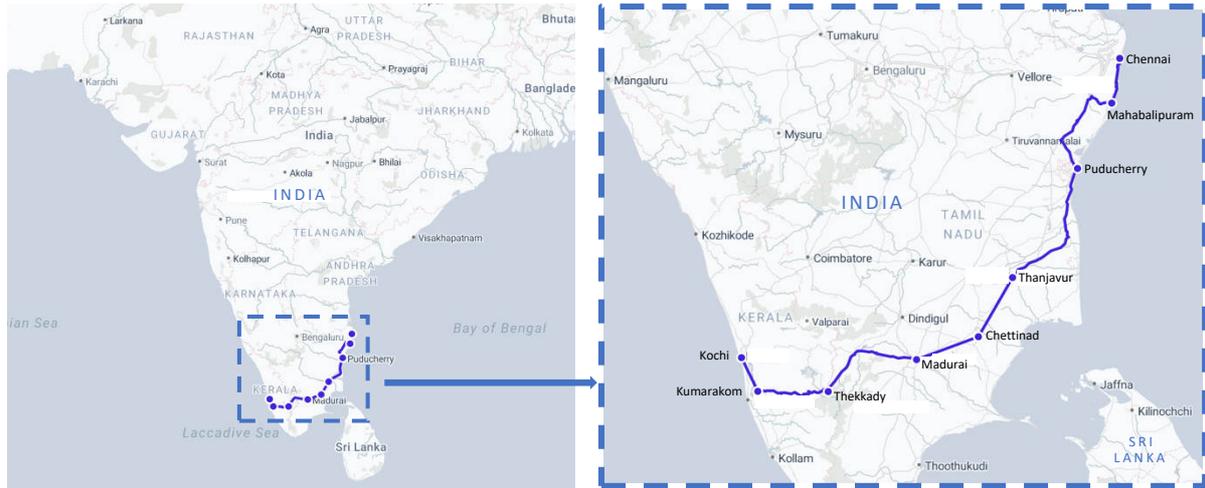
A journey that begins in the bougainvillea-lined streets of French colonial Puducherry, travels through the ancient Hindu heartland of Tamil Nadu, winds through Kerala's lush tea and spice plantations, cruises along its backwaters and concludes in the cultural capital of Kochi



SOUTH INDIA

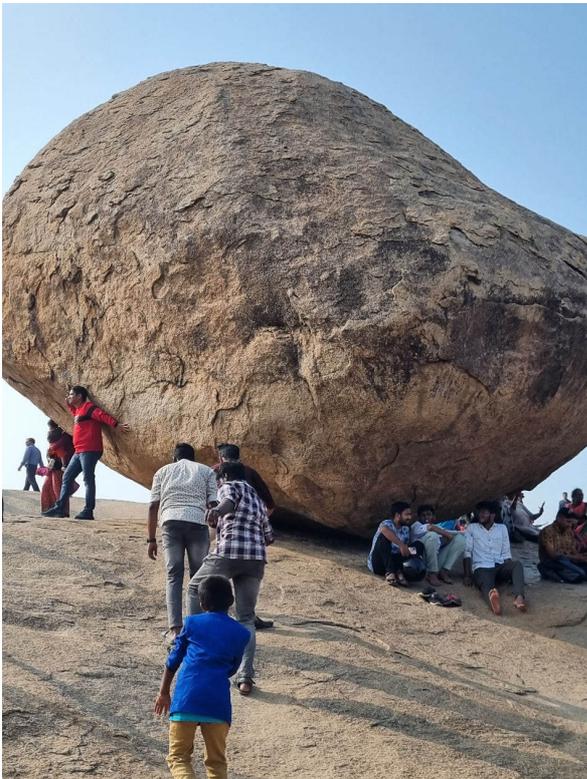
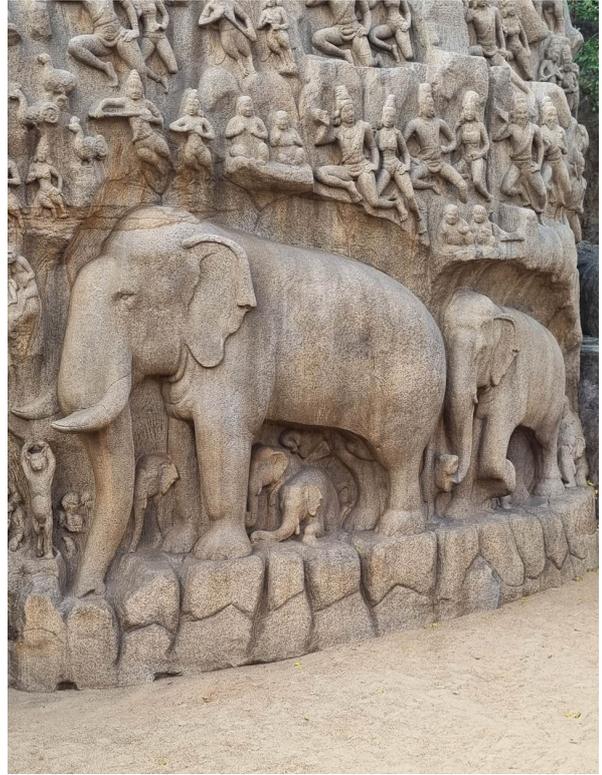
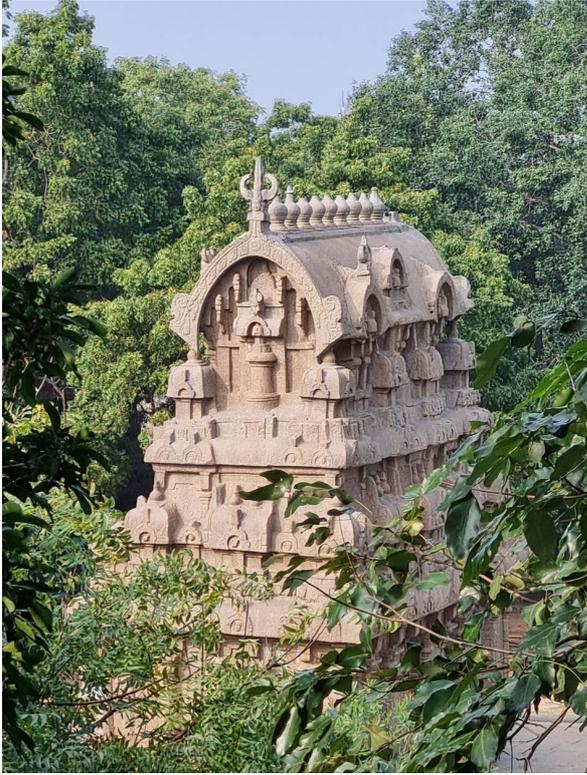
4-20 JANUARY 2027

BOOKINGS CLOSE 28 AUGUST 2026



## AT A GLANCE

<b>Dates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> January 2027 (17 days, 16 nights)</li> </ul>
<b>Hotels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taj Fisherman's Cove Resort, Chennai</li> <li>• Palais de Mahe, Puducherry</li> <li>• The Lotus Palace, Chettinad</li> <li>• Visalam, Chettinad</li> <li>• Heritage Madurai, Madurai</li> <li>• Spice Village, Thekkady</li> <li>• Coconut Grove, Kumarakom</li> <li>• Eighth Bastion, Kochi</li> </ul>
<b>Meals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakfasts daily (16), lunches (1), afternoon teas (7) and dinners (1)</li> </ul>
<b>Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air-conditioned private vehicles; private airport transfers included</li> <li>• Boats for exploring Periyar Tiger Reserve and Kerala's backwaters</li> </ul>
<b>Your Hosts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour leader: designer, Nicole Court (Sydney based)</li> <li>• Tour manager (India based)</li> <li>• Specialist local guides</li> </ul>
<b>Group size</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9-16 guests</li> </ul>
<b>Pricing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AUD\$15,950 per person, twin share</li> <li>• AUD\$6,500 single supplement</li> </ul>
<b>Bookings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A deposit of AUD\$1,000 is required to reserve a spot on this trip (please see Tour Details on page 26 for the full payment schedule)</li> </ul>
<b>Itinerary Highlights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curated art, architecture, landscape, textile, craft and history-focused excursions for an insider's perspective into South India</li> <li>• Walking the bougainvillea-lined streets of French colonial Puducherry</li> <li>• UNESCO World Heritage-listed Brihadeeswarar Temple, Thanjavur</li> <li>• Staying in some of South India's most beautiful hotels, including a beautifully restored Art Deco mansion in Chettinad</li> <li>• Exploring tea &amp; spice gardens in the hills of the Western Ghats</li> <li>• Cruising the serene backwaters of Kerala</li> <li>• Immersing ourselves in atmospheric Kochi, amidst old Portuguese, Dutch and British architecture</li> </ul>
<b>Best time of year to visit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December and January have the coolest temperatures – sunny 28°C to 32°C days and balmy 20°C evenings make for lovely travelling weather</li> </ul>



MAMALLAPURAM – UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE-LISTED MONUMENTS

## INTRODUCTION

### **SOUTH INDIA IS RENOWNED FOR ITS ART, ANCIENT CIVILISATIONS AND SPICES.**

Sacred rituals, deeply rooted in tradition, continue to play a vital role in daily life. Women, clad in colourful saris, adorn their hair with fragrant flowers, embodying the region's beauty and grace. Indian textiles, once one of the world's most valuable trading commodities, were central to the cultural exchange between East and West, and the bustling ports of South India, which flourished when trade winds and maritime routes connected distant lands, boast fascinating histories of foreign interactions – from the Roman Empire to the East India Company.

You are invited to join us in January 2027 for an Art, Architecture & Design Tour to South India, an intimate and curated journey led by design expert, Nicole Court. Together, we will uncover South India's most exquisite cultural expressions: from Tamil temples and palaces, and traditional crafts, to Puducherry's French colonial architecture. This journey is immersive and personal – offering behind-the-scenes access to private homes, galleries, spice gardens, artists, temples and archaeological sites.

Over 17 days, we will wind through South India's highlands, plains and coasts, encountering heritage in both grand and everyday forms. The medieval city of Thanjavur, with its colossal temple, offers awe-inspiring moments for lovers of early Asian architecture. In Chettinad, we will catch a glimpse of its once majestic grandeur in the now-abandoned mansions of merchant princes. In the highlands of Thekkady, we will meet spice growers and tea planters, before descending to the coast to explore Kerala's backwaters. Nicole will guide us through private homes and studios, and share insights into Tamil symbolism, Indo-colonial design and decorative arts that fuse Indian, Moorish, Dutch, and British influences.

Expect moments straight out of an artist's sketchbook: floating lotus pools at dawn; the scent of wet sandalwood after temple prayers; a weaver's nimble hands at work; wild elephants at play as we float past on boats; Kathakali classical dancers applying their intricate makeup; rolling hills carpeted in neatly ordered tea bushes; and the stillness of Periyar's lake reflecting the sky. The accommodations are just as transportive. Imagine a stay the heart of Puducherry's charming French Quarter; swimming in a stepped temple-style pool designed by Geoffrey Bawa, famous for his Tropical Modernist architecture; staying in an Art Deco mansion surrounded by lush gardens; or having your afternoon tea served from a boat whilst staying in a traditional wooden Kerala house on the lake. Each property offers its own rhythm – always deeply rooted in its setting and in harmony with local culture.

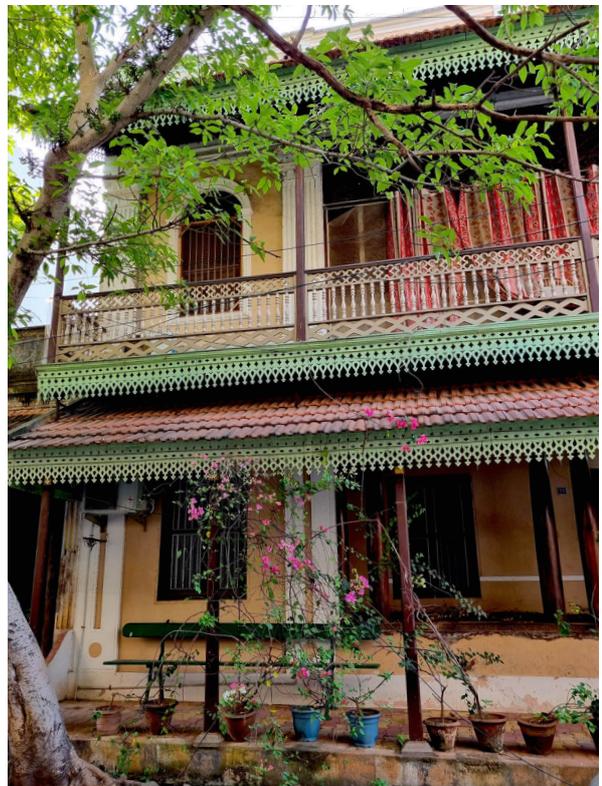
This is an opportunity to experience a deeper South India – not just a holiday, but a richly textured creative pilgrimage. Our journeys are always personal in scale. This tour has a minimum of 9 guests and a maximum of 16 – a size that allows for genuine encounters with artists, curators, chefs, community leaders, and naturalists who bring meaning to place. Whether you are drawn to textiles, gardens, architecture, or simply the sensory pleasure of travel, this tour promises to be transformative and unforgettable.

### **CONSCIOUS LUXURY**

Every property and partner we work with is selected with intention. Our hotels are part of a small community of hoteliers and heritage custodians who understand luxury as an immersive and responsible experience. They share common values:

- Preserving architectural and cultural heritage
- Supporting environmental conservation and sustainable land use
- Empowering local communities through training and employment
- Offering exceptional hospitality, design, and a strong sense of place

This is luxury with integrity – slow, soulful, and enriching. It is travel that celebrates beauty, heritage, and the art of meaningful connection.



PUDUCHERRY

**ITINERARY SUMMARY\***  
**A 16-night Insider Journey with Nicole Court**

**Day 1 • Arrive in Chennai**

- Arrive at Chennai Airport – be met on arrival for your private transfer to our seaside resort.
- Meet Nicole and your fellow travellers at a welcome afternoon tea.

**Stay:** *Taj Fisherman's Cove Resort & Spa, Chennai (Deluxe Room Sea View) | Meals: Afternoon Tea*

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**Day 2 • Mahabalipuram's UNESCO World Heritage-listed rock-cut temples**

- Explore Mahabalipuram's UNESCO World Heritage-listed rock-cut temples.
- Continue to Puducherry and settle into your elegant hotel in the French Quarter.

**Stay:** *Palais de Mabe, Puducherry (Palais Chambre Deluxe) | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch*

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**Day 3 • French-colonial Puducherry**

- Discover Puducherry's vibrant Goubert Market before an afternoon walk through the French Quarter. Enjoy time to shop and explore at leisure.

**Stay:** *Palais de Mabe, Puducherry (Palais Chambre Deluxe) | Meals: Breakfast*

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**Day 4 • Spiritual Auroville and the Matrimandir**

- Visit Auroville, an experimental township dedicated to human unity, and home to the striking Matrimandir, before returning to Puducherry for a relaxed afternoon.

**Stay:** *Palais de Mabe, Puducherry (Palais Chambre Deluxe) | Meals: Breakfast*

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**Day 5 • Tanjore's cultural heritage and World Heritage-listed Brihadeeswarar Temple**

- Visit the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Brihadeeswarar Temple.
- A Tanjore painting studio visit, and a viewing of rare manuscripts at India's oldest library.
- Continue to Chettinad and settle into a recently restored 250-year-old mansion.

**Stay:** *The Lotus Palace, Chettinad | Meals: Breakfast*

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**Day 6 • A rural harvest festival and the mansions of Chettinad**

- We will attend a rural celebration of the harvest, followed by a village walk to admire and visit some of the area's 11,000 mansions (now mainly abandoned) which were built during the height of the Chettiar community's power, wealth and influence in the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Afternoon at leisure.

**Stay:** *The Lotus Palace, Chettinad | Meals: Breakfast*

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**Day 7 • Antiques shopping, a cooking lesson and a stay in a restored Art Deco mansion**

- Shopping in the renowned antique shops of Chettinad.
- Learn to cook Chettinad cuisine.

**Stay:** *Visalam, Chettinad (Chettinad Room) | Meals: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

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**Day 8 • Chettinad: Ancient temples, handloom weaving and sacred groves**

- A visit to a 9<sup>th</sup> century temple built by the Pallavas in the Dravidian style of architecture.
- Visit to the local handloom weavers.
- A special visit to a sacred grove in a forest filled with offering of terracotta horses.

**Stay:** *Visalam, Chettinad (Chettinad Room) | Meals: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

**\*Detailed itinerary can be found on p8**

## ITINERARY SUMMARY (CONTINUED)\*

### Day 9 • One of Chettinad's grandest mansions and a visit to the tile makers

- A tour of one of the grandest mansions, famous for its exquisite tiles, followed by a visit to the artisans still making handmade tiles in the traditional way, before an afternoon at leisure.

**Stay:** *Visalam, Chettinad (Chettinad Room)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

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### Day 10 • Madurai's Dravidian architecture and a stay at a Geoffrey Bawa-designed hotel

- Travel to Madurai this morning to stay at a special property designed by Sri Lankan architect, Geoffrey Bawa, with free time before we explore the iconic Meenakshi Amman Temple.

**Stay:** *Heritage Madurai, Madurai (Luxury Plunge Pool Villa)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast*

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### Day 11 • Madurai's flower markets and an Indo-Saracenic palace

- Visit Madurai's vibrant flower market where locals gather to select festival blooms for decorating their homes for Pongol before continuing to an impressive 17<sup>th</sup> century Indo-Saracenic palace that reflects the city's layered architectural heritage.

- Afternoon at leisure.

**Stay:** *Heritage Madurai, Madurai (Luxury Plunge Pool Villa)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast*

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### Day 12 • Pongol festival in Madurai, then to the spice gardens of Kerala's lush hills

- Start the day celebrating Pongol, the harvest festival dedicated to Surya, the Sun God.

- A scenic drive up into the Western Ghats to Thekkady and a botanical spice walk.

**Stay:** *Spice Village, Thekkady (Spice Garden Cottage)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

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### Day 13 • Boating in Periyar National Park, a tea plantation visit, and a cooking class

- Morning cruise on the serene lake in Periyar National Park, followed by a tea plantation visit.

- Cooking class to learn about spices used in Keralan cuisine.

**Stay:** *Spice Village, Thekkady (Spice Garden Cottage)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

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### Day 14 • A scenic journey through the Western Ghats to Kerala's tranquil backwaters

- A scenic drive down the Western Ghats to Kerala's backwaters, stopping at Kerala's most iconic umbrella maker on our way to Vembanad Lake.

- We will arrive at our lakeside retreat by boat.

**Stay:** *Coconut Lagoon, Kumarakom (Heritage Bungalow)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

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### Day 15 • Kochi & Keralan Classical Dance Performance

- Enjoy a relaxed morning before travelling to Kochi.

- See the artists apply their elaborate makeup before a Kathakali dance performance.

**Stay:** *Eighth Bastion, Fort Kochi (Bastion Room)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast*

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### Day 16 • Exploring Kochi & Farewell Dinner

- Explore Kochi's palaces, art galleries and antique shops.

- Farewell dinner.

**Stay:** *Eighth Bastion, Fort Kochi (Bastion Room)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast, Dinner*

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### Day 17 • Departure

- Enjoy a relaxed morning before your private transfer to Kochi Airport.

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

**\*Detailed itinerary can be found on p8**



TAMIL QUARTER, PUDUCHERRY

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### A 16-night Insider Journey with Nicole Court

Art | Architecture | Spices | Textiles | History

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#### DAY 1 • Arrival in Chennai

Upon arrival at Chennai International Airport, our friendly representative will greet you with a warm smile and a placard displaying your name. You will then be privately transferred in an air-conditioned car to your seaside resort (1hr 10 mins drive). Check-in is from 2 pm onwards.

Welcome afternoon tea in the garden to meet your fellow travellers and your host, Nicole Court.

**Accommodation:** *Taj Fisherman's Cove Resort & Spa, Chennai (Deluxe Room Sea View)* |

*Meals included: Welcome Afternoon Tea*

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#### *Taj Fisherman's Cove Resort*

Nestled within the historic walls of a centuries-old Dutch fort, Taj Fisherman's Cove Resort & Spa is a tropical 5-star retreat with a private beach and lovely views of the Bay of Bengal.

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## TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu is the homeland of one of humanity's living classical civilisations, stretching back uninterrupted for two millennia. This vibrant culture is very much alive in the Tamils' language, dance, poetry and forms of Hinduism. The region is home to some of India's most remarkable temples, from the intricate stone carvings at Thanjavur to the grand halls at Madurai.

The landscape is dotted with towering, pastel-hued temples. Its long coastline, the Coromandel Coast, bears the remnants of forgotten European trading posts and has a fascinating history of foreign interactions, from the Roman Empire to the British East India Company.

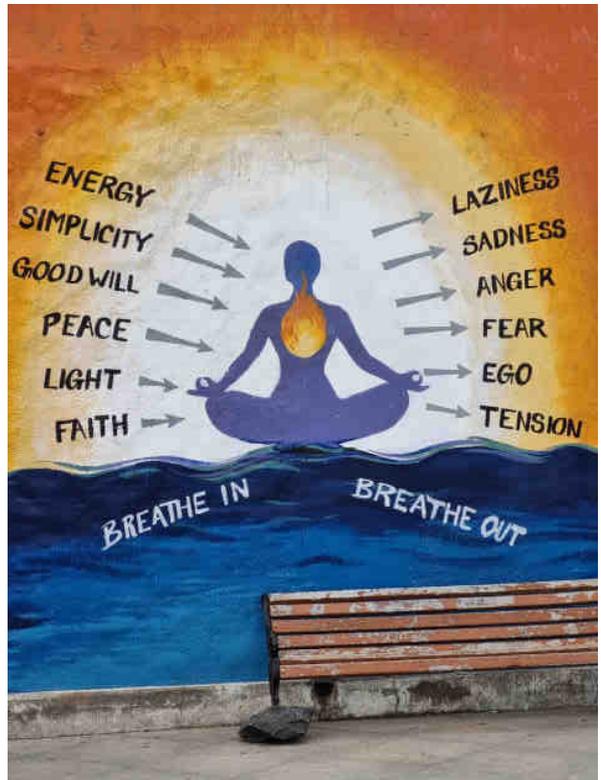
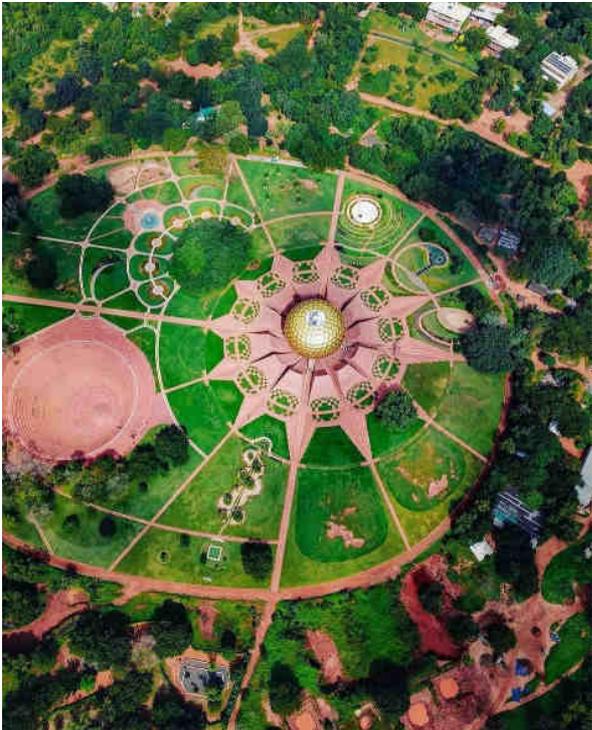
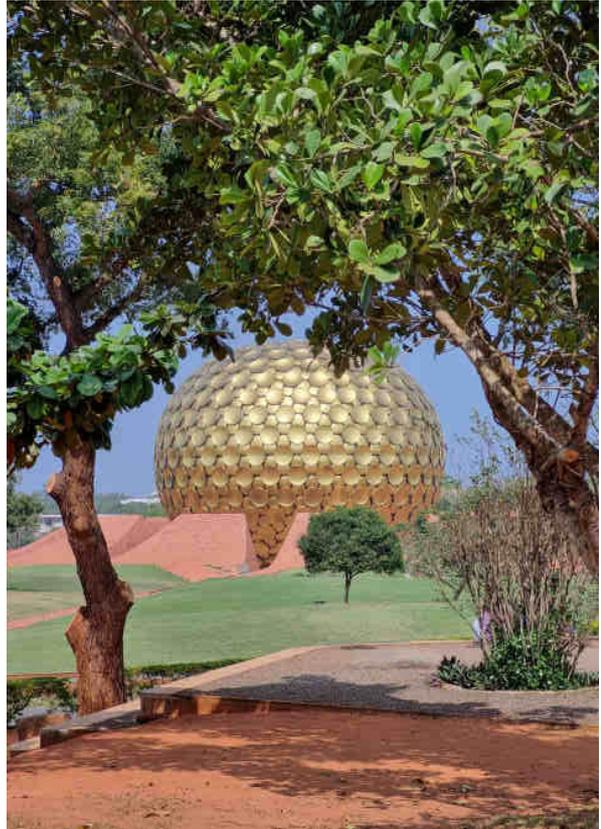
The long history of Dravidian civilisation in Tamil Nadu is one that predates the dominant Aryans of the North, and because of this, Tamils feel they are more deeply rooted in the Indian subcontinent. There is a distinct "otherness" to Tamil Nadu – its language and culture are unlike anywhere else in India. Tamil Nadu has a reputation for being conservative and devoutly religious. While this may still largely hold true, a gradual transformation is taking place as the state increasingly deals with the outside world. Amidst ancient temple gates, glass-and-steel offices of modern IT companies thrive, and the Tamil-language film industry rivals Bollywood.

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#### DAY 2 • Mahabalipuram's UNESCO World Heritage Site

Our first stop is Mahabalipuram (20 mins drive). A major seaport in the 7th and 8th centuries, Mamallapuram is now a tranquil spot on the Coromandel Coast. This UNESCO World Heritage site offers a fascinating glimpse into the artistic and technical brilliance of the Pallava artisans, who carved intricate temples directly from the natural landscape. The world's largest bas-relief, the Descent of the Ganges, is one of the extraordinary works of Indian art that you will see here.

Another highlight is the Shore Temple, which is said to be one of seven temples that once stood here. It is carved from a single, massive rock. Local legend says that the god Indra submerged the others during a mighty storm, leaving only the Shore Temple above the waves. This myth persisted until the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, when the sea receded by 500 metres. To the amazement of local fishermen and tourists, a long row of large rocks emerged from the water, possibly remnants of the submerged temples.



AUROVILLE

## **Mahabalipuram to Puducherry**

After exploring Mahabalipuram, we will drive to Puducherry (2 hrs). Once a French colony, Puducherry is now one of India's most picturesque towns, with its French colonial architecture and relaxed, coastal vibe.

**Accommodation:** *Palais de Mahe, Puducherry (Palais Chambre Deluxe) | Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch*

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### *Palais de Mahe*

Palais de Mahé is located in Puducherry's charming French Quarter. Just steps away from the seafront promenade, this elegant hotel features spacious rooms that blend colonial architecture with modern comforts.

The hotel has a polished, old-world vibe. The centrepiece is a sleek pool with sun lounges accessorised with nautical-striped towels. On the rooftop terrace, the hotel's restaurant offers lovely views over the rooftops of the French Quarter to the sea.

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## **PUDUCHERRY**

Until 1954, Puducherry (formerly known as Pondicherry) was a French colony, and it has preserved much of its colonial charm, including its French street names. The streets are lined with villas painted in vibrant colours with bougainvillea-clad doorways. The town is home to cafes, restaurants, boutiques, and galleries, many showcasing local artisanal products, while the police force still sports the distinctive red French *képis*.

Pondy (as it is fondly called by its residents) is regularly featured in the top ten cleanest cities in India, with its streets kept spick and span by its ever-present teams of lady sweepers (providing employment for underprivileged women).

Pondicherry also draws spiritually minded visitors to the internationally renowned Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the nearby experimental community of Auroville. These places offer immersive experiences in expanding collective consciousness through yoga and meditation.

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### **DAY 3 • Puducherry – exploring the Tamil and French Quarters**

We will visit busy Goubert Market this morning to get a glimpse of the daily life of Puducherry. There is a lively fish section, run by women. There are also merchants sitting behind mountains of dried chillies and aromatic spices; rows and rows of fresh local produce, banana leaves, and coconuts; butchers portioning chunks of beef and pork; and flower sellers threading garlands and selling flower petals by the kilo.

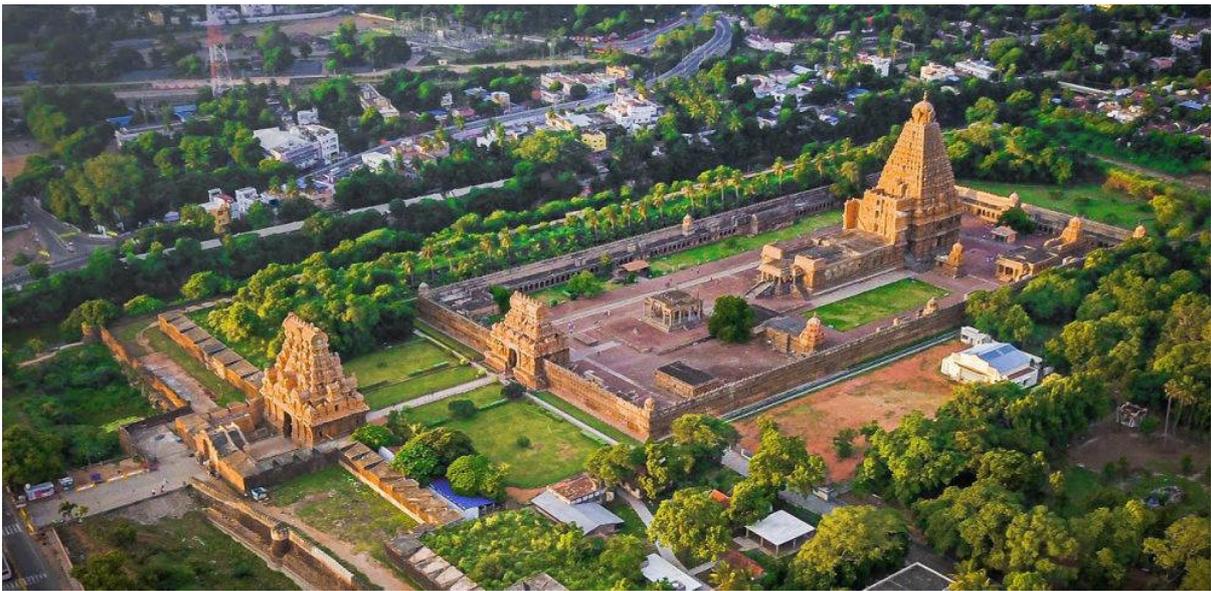
This afternoon we will walk the tree-lined streets of the French Quarter (called the White Town) with to learn more about Puducherry's architecture. There will also be time to shop in the upmarket boutiques or visit one of the lovely cafes. We will also take you see a beautiful church that has interiors that are a meditation on colour, with stained glass windows that open onto flower-filled gardens.

**Accommodation:** *Palais de Mahe, Puducherry (Palais Chambre Deluxe) | Meals included: Breakfast*

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### **DAY 4 • Spiritual Auroville – dedicated to peace**

We will visit Auroville this morning (30 mins drive). Auroville is an experimental, non-denominational township dedicated to human unity and peace. Since its inception in 1968, Auroville has attracted people from all over India, and the world. We will visit the Matrimandir, a golden globe at the heart of Auroville.



UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE-LISTED BRIHADISHWARA TEMPLE IN THANJUVAR (c. 1010AD)

The concept of “The Mother” represents the great evolutionary, conscious, and intelligent principle of Life – the Universal Mother – which seeks to help humanity transcend its current limitations and enter the next phase of evolution, known as the supramental consciousness.

There are twelve gardens surrounding the Matrimandir. They serve as the spiritual foundation for the city. Each is designed to symbolise a different idea, such as Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Light, Life, Power, Wealth, Utility, Progress, Youth, Harmony and Perfection.

The houses and buildings spiral around the centre, with green spaces interspersed throughout, and the industrial areas are located at the periphery. The vision for Auroville is for it to be an ideal place to raise children, where they can grow up in a natural environment while still benefiting from modern technology.

Afterwards, we will return to Puducherry (30 mins drive). This afternoon is free for you to relax and explore at your own pace.

**Accommodation:** *Palais de Mabe, Puducherry (Palais Chambre Deluxe) | Meals included: Breakfast*

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### **DAY 5 • Thanjavur’s great temple architecture**

This morning we will drive to Thanjavur (3hrs) to visit the Brihadeeswarar Temple which stands as the pinnacle of Tamil temple architecture. It is one of the largest and most awe-inspiring temples in India. A UNESCO World Heritage site, it was built in the 11th century, and it showcases the Chola dynasty’s artistic legacy. The temple features an enormous central dome (which was the largest of its kind in the world when it was built) as well as intricate sculptures, frescoes and towering gateways.

#### **Tanjore painting**

We will visit a local atelier to learn about the school of Tanjore painting and see the artists at work. These highly collectible artworks are usually adorned with gold and depict Hindu deities, goddesses, and mythological scenes (Nicole’s favourites are the glass-painted ones).

#### **India’s oldest library**

We will finish with a glimpse into Thanjavur’s literary heritage at the Saraswathi Mahal Library. It is one of the oldest libraries in India and is renowned for its rare collection of ancient manuscripts and books. We will also visit the Art Gallery and the Chola Museum to see a remarkable collection of bronze sculptures, murals and paintings.

Afterwards, we will continue to Chettinad (1 hr 45 mins drive)

**Accommodation:** *The Lotus Palace, Chettinad | Meals included: Breakfast*

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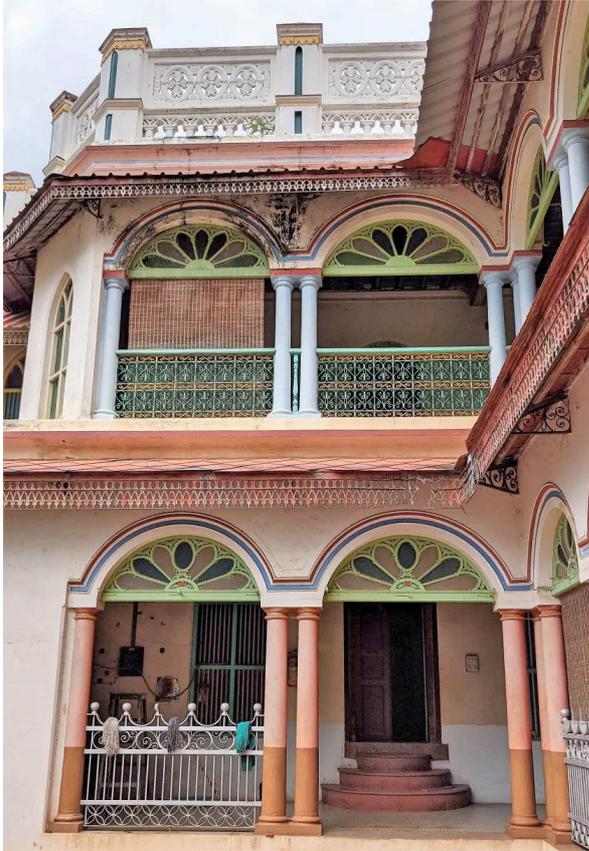
#### ***The Lotus Palace, Chettinad***

This sensitively restored mansion reveals the sophistication of Chettinad architecture through its courtyards, richly patterned Athangudi tiles, carved teak columns, and curated antiques, with a contemporary sensibility that is a meditation on colour.

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### **THANJAVUR**

Thanjavur (formerly known as Tanjore) boasts a rich and fascinating history that is expressed through its architecture, art, and cultural heritage. Founded over a thousand years ago, the city has been a cornerstone not only of Tamil Nadu, but of South Indian civilisation. As the heart of the mighty Chola Empire, Thanjavur’s influence stretched well beyond the Tamil region, shaping the cultural landscape of much of the Indian subcontinent, as well as Southeast Asia. The Cholas left behind an enduring legacy of grand temples, intricate sculptures and a distinctive artistic style that continues to be celebrated today.



THE MANSIONS OF CHETTINAD

## CHETTINAD

Chettinad is the homeland of the Chettiars. It is dotted with grand yet faded mansions, remnants of a bygone era when the community amassed enormous wealth across Asia during the days of the British Empire. These sprawling homes, 11,000 of them, often occupying entire city blocks, boast interiors with egg-plaster walls, crystal chandeliers, Burmese teak columns, Italian marble, patterned tiled floors, and intricate wood carvings. They are a living museum of Chettinad's glorious past and on the tentative list for UNESCO World Heritage recognition.

The name "Chettiar" is derived from the Sanskrit word *Sbreshbti*, meaning "wealth" – a fitting title for this prosperous merchant community. While the Chettiars have existed since at least the Chola period, it was during the 19th century, at the height of the British Empire, that they rose from traders to powerful moneylenders in nearly every British colony in Asia, from Burma to Singapore. They became the single most important financiers in the whole of Southeast Asia, with a client list that included royalty and the British East India Company.

By 1920, Chettiar loans underwrote 80% of Burma's agrarian and trading economy. But in the 1920s, crisis struck. The Great Depression meant that millions of people defaulted on their debts at the same time. Between 1931-8, the Tamil Chettiar community suddenly found themselves in possession of a quarter of all Burmese land. This incited a devastating backlash. There were anti-Indian riots and in 1937 Burma was administratively separated from British India. As a result, many Chettiars started repatriating their assets back to Madras (now known as Chennai) in the late 1930s. But it was the Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942 that prompted the tragic re-migration of a more substantial majority of Indian communities by sea, air or through the jungles of north-western Burma. Nearly half a million fled between January and June 1942.

After the war, the Burmese *Land Nationalisation Act 1948*, effectively stopped Indian communities (often born in Burma) from repatriating back to independent Burma (and recovering their properties). As a result, much of the community would migrate to India between the 1940s and 1960s, effectively becoming displaced persons in their Indian homeland. By the 1980s, increasingly anti-Indian measures enacted by an openly xenophobic Burmese military rule resulted in most of the remaining Burmese Indian community migrating to Thailand, Singapore, Bangladesh and Pakistan, and beyond, to the West.

Seeing glimpses of the former glory of these Art Deco, Victorian, Tudor and Neoclassical mansions, with a distinctly Indian sensibility, will be a highlight of our India Design Tour.

### **DAY 6 • Pre-Pongol festivities and the architectural splendour of Chettinad's mansions**

This morning, we attend a rural harvest celebration (subject to availability), where tradition is expressed with colour, ceremony, and pride. The festivities may include demonstrations of classical dance and Silambam – the ancient Tamil martial art practiced for over two millennia – alongside the pageantry of local dignitaries and state ministers, and the exuberant presence of village youth. As honoured guests, we might even find ourselves in the local spotlight – perhaps appearing on the TV news, as has happened on previous visits.

In the afternoon, we will stroll from our hotel through the surrounding streets to admire a selection of Chettinad's extraordinary mansions – part of an estimated 11,000 built during the height of the Chettiar community's prosperity from the 18th to early 20th centuries. Many now stand quietly abandoned, their scale and craftsmanship offering a poignant insight into a once-global mercantile culture. You may like to conclude with afternoon tea (at an extra charge) in the hotel's bijou Red Room: an intimate, jewel-like space with Art Deco lounge chairs, walls painted the deep hue of Burmese red lacquer, and shelves lined with patterned china and polished brass objects, with an atmosphere reminiscent of an Oriental period film set.

**Accommodation:** *The Lotus Palace, Chettinad* | **Meals included:** *Breakfast*



CHETTINAD (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT):- DAILY RITUALS, VINTAGE AND ANTIQUE SHOPPING, ATHANGUDI TILE MAKING, COOKING, STREET SCENES, AND HANDLOOM WEAVING

**DAY 7 • Antiques shopping, hand loom weaving and a stay in an Art Deco mansion**

A free morning followed by antique and vintage shopping. Chettinad is renowned for its shops filled with an incredible array of items, from enamel ware, trays, porcelain, cutlery, spice boxes, kitchen utensils and teapots, to radios, beautiful mirrors and lamps – the list goes on – treasures from the community's former glory days.

Known for its bold, aromatic flavours, Chettinad cuisine is among the spiciest and most celebrated in India. To give you an authentic taste of the region, we will have a cooking class to learn how to prepare traditional Chettinad dishes.

**Accommodation:** *Visalam (Chettinad Room)* | *Meals included: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

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*Visalam*

This 1930s Art Deco mansion is decorated with the original owners' furniture and paintings. Each of the guest rooms is decorated with antiques, vintage photographs and local textiles, and has large windows overlooking the gardens. There is also a lovely pool.

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**DAY 8 • Ancient temples, mansions, traditional tile making and a sacred forest grove**

This morning we will visit a temple built by the Pallavas in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. A jewel of Dravidian architecture, this temple showcases intricate stone carvings, vibrant frescoes, and ornate pillared halls, offering an intimate glimpse into the artistry and devotional architecture of South India.

Afterwards, we will visit a nearby handloom unit, where we will watch artisans weave beautifully coloured textiles. We will end the day with a special visit to a sacred grove in a forest filled with offerings of terracotta horses.

**Accommodation:** *Visalam (Chettinad Room)* | *Meals included: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

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**DAY 9 • Ancient temples, mansions, traditional tile making and a sacred forest grove**

This morning we will explore one of Chettinad's most magnificent mansions, renowned for its intricate tile work, and then visit the artisans who continue to craft handmade tiles using traditional techniques, before an afternoon at leisure.

**Accommodation:** *Visalam (Chettinad Room)* | *Meals included: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

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**DAY 10 • Dravidian temple architecture and a stay at a Geoffrey Bawa-designed hotel**

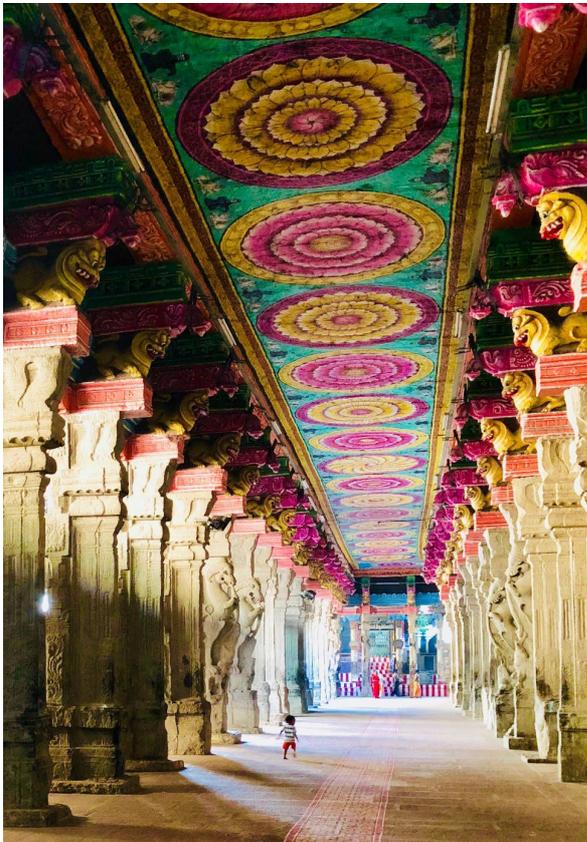
This morning we will drive to holy city of Madurai (2 hours). In the afternoon, we will visit Meenakshi Amman Temple – the iconic heart of Madurai and one of the most important Hindu temples in India. This magnificent 17th-century temple, dedicated to Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Shiva, is a masterpiece of Dravidian architecture, with towering gateways and grand pillared halls. The 20,000 pilgrims who visit daily, and the priests who attend them, bring the temple to life in a truly spiritual experience.

**Accommodation:** *Heritage Madurai (Luxury Plunge Pool Villa)* | *Meals included: Breakfast*

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*Heritage Madurai*

This serene retreat was once home to the old Madurai Club, designed by renowned Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa, famous for his Tropical Modernism style. The space has since been beautifully transformed into a boutique hotel, featuring intricate Kerala-style woodwork, a charming sunken pool inspired by traditional temple-style ponds, and 17 acres of lush gardens.



MADURAI

## MADURAI

While Chennai may be the capital of Tamil Nadu, Madurai is undeniably its soul. A city with a history dating back 2,500 years, Madurai is one of India's oldest continuously inhabited urban centres, steeped in tradition and antiquity. Once a bustling trading hub with ancient Rome, Madurai is dominated by the majestic Meenakshi Amman Temple and is renowned for its vibrant culture, classical dance and music, and rich weaving heritage.

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### DAY 11 • Madurai's flower market and 17<sup>th</sup> century palace

Indian culture is suffused with perfume. From water scented with holy basil, known locally as *tulsi*, to sandalwood paste and garlands of jasmine and roses, Hindu rituals use an array of fragrances to bathe, decorate, and feed their gods. And here in the south, women wear strings of jasmine blooms called *gajra* in their hair. Perfumers from all over the world come to Madurai because the most beautifully fragranced jasmine is grown here (it's all about the terroir).

We will visit the busy flower market this morning to see locals selecting blooms for decorating their homes for Pongol tomorrow, followed by a visit to a beautiful Indo-Saracenic architectural gem, the Thirumalai Nayakkar Palace, which was built in the 17th century.

This afternoon is at leisure – take a dip in your private pool, explore the lush gardens, or unwind with an Ayurvedic massage at the spa (at an additional cost).

**Accommodation:** *Heritage Madurai (Luxury Plunge Pool Villa)* | **Meals included:** *Breakfast*

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### *Spice Village*

Spice Village is designed as a traditional village, set in a spice garden in the cool highlands of Periyar in Thekkady. It is focused on sustainability and local traditions and offers a unique blend of nature, culture, and comfort.

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## WESTERN GHATS

Older than the Himalaya mountains, the mountain chain of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Western Ghats represents geomorphic features of immense importance with unique biophysical and ecological processes. The site's high montane forest ecosystems influence the Indian monsoon weather pattern. Moderating the tropical climate of the region, the site presents one of the best examples of the monsoon system on the planet. It also has an exceptionally high level of biological diversity and endemism and is recognized as one of the world's eight 'hottest hotspots' of biological diversity. The forests of the site include some of the best representatives of non equatorial tropical evergreen forests anywhere and are home to at least 325 globally threatened flora, fauna, bird, amphibian, reptile and fish species.

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## KERALA

Known as 'God's Own Country', this slender coastal strip is defined by its layered landscape: almost 600km of Arabian Sea coast; a languid network of glistening backwaters; and the spice and tea-covered hills of the Western Ghats, dotted with protected wildlife reserves and cool hill stations. Kerala is a world away from the hectic pace of the rest of India.

Traders have been drawn to Kerala's spices for more than 3,000 years. The coast was known to the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Arabs and the Chinese, and was a transit point for the spices from the Moluccas (eastern Indonesia).

Vasco da Gama's arrival in 1498 opened the floodgates to European colonialism as Portuguese, Dutch and English interests fought Arab traders, and then each other, for control of the



THE SPICE GARDENS AND WILDLIFE OF THE WESTERN GHATS IN KERALA

lucrative spice trade. You can still see the history of the spice trade in Kochi (formerly Cochin), where the peppery whiff of the past is easy to find in the backstreets and busy wharves.

Kerala's long links with maritime trade have resulted in a multicultural society unlike anywhere else in India. As well as the majority Hindu population, almost 20% of the population are Christian, followers of a faith that has had a presence here far longer than in Western Europe – St Thomas the Apostle is said to have landed in Kerala in 52 AD, bringing Christianity to the subcontinent. The local Muslim community (25%) has its roots in trade across the Indian Ocean, and there is even a deep-rooted, though tiny, Keralan Jewish community. A tradition of valuing the arts and education resulted in a post-Independence state that is one of the most progressive in India, with the nation's highest literacy rate.

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**DAY 12 • Kerala's tea and spice country: A botanical walk and a cooking class**

This morning we have a scenic drive – up into the green rolling hills of the Western Ghats (3hrs), to Thekkady, located in the neighbouring state of Kerala. After settling into our lovely hotel, we will enjoy a botanical walk with a naturalist with an emphasis on spices, explaining the cultivation, harvesting techniques, and health benefits of the aromatic herbs and spices that are grown here, such as cardamom, pepper, vanilla and cinnamon. Afterwards, there will be a culinary session to learn about how the spices are used in Keralan cuisine, using produce from the hotel's organic kitchen garden.

**Accommodation:** *Spice Village (Spice Garden Cottage), Thekkady* | *Meals included: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

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**DAY 13 • Thekkady: Boating in Periyar National Park and a tea plantation visit**

Bison, sambar, wild boar, langur, around 2,000 elephants and 35 to 40 tigers wander the lushly green hills of Periyar Tiger Reserve in the Western Ghats, where we have organised a cruise on its peaceful lake. Herds of elephants and sambar deer are sometimes seen, and we may also spot gaur (large wild ox) and wild boar in the grasslands. A variety of birds such as darters, egrets and kingfishers are usually spotted. Hopefully we will also see the Smooth Indian otter.

This afternoon there will be free time before we visit a tea plantation to learn about the history of tea in India and the ergonomics of plantations. We will finish with a tea tasting.

**Accommodation:** *Spice Village (Spice Garden Cottage), Thekkady* | *Meals included: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

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**Coconut Lagoon**

Coconut Lagoon is located on a sheltered cove on Vembanad Lake. This backwater destination is nestled amidst canals, paddy fields and lush natural life. The villas of the resort are beautiful old Kerala homes called *tharavads*, that were rescued from demolition and carefully reconstructed in this beautiful setting. The lake is home to a plethora of natural life, with rare species of plants, butterflies, birds and sea creatures. A tranquil haven.

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**DAY 14 • Thekkady to Kumarakom: A scenic journey down to Kerala's backwaters**

This morning we will drive towards the coast to the lush, greenery-fringed backwaters of Kerala (4 hours). This tranquil water world is dotted with villages, punted canoes, toddy shops, and houseboats. We will observe the peaceful rhythms of village life along the banks as we journey towards our lakeside resort by boat.



THE BACKWATERS, KERALA

The afternoon is free to enjoy this beautiful resort and all it has to offer before we cruise the Vembanad Lake at sunset. This is one of India's largest lakes and wetland eco systems, home to many species of rare plant, bird and animal life.

**Accommodation:** *Coconut Lagoon (Heritage Bungalow), Kumarakom* | *Meals included: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

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**DAY 15 • Kumarakom – Kochi:** This morning is at leisure. This afternoon we will drive to Kochi (2 hrs). After settling into our hotel, you might enjoy a stroll to Fort Kochi beach to watch locals fly kites and young boys playing football. The iconic Chinese fishing nets are nearby, and the area also has charming cafes and shops to explore.

Later, we will experience Kathakali, a centuries-old Keralan form of classical dance that narrates mythological tales through expressive facial gestures, hand movements, and rhythmic dance. Known for its complexity, Kathakali is accompanied by live singers who narrate the story in melodic verses. The grand costumes and intricate makeup transform performers into larger-than-life characters. UNESCO has recognized Kathakali as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Tonight, we will attend a performance and have the opportunity to witness the artists applying their elaborate makeup before the show.

**Accommodation:** *Eighth Bastion, Fort Kochi (Bastion Room)* | *Meals included: Breakfast*

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### *Eighth Bastion*

The contemporary design of this boutique hotel was inspired by the elegance of colonial architecture. It is located in a tranquil spot at the heart of historic Fort Kochi.

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## **KOCHI**

One of the most atmospheric places in the south of India, Kochi (formerly known as Cochin) is a city of peninsulas and islands, on a large natural harbour. Old Kochi, where we are staying, is the peninsula comprising of Fort Kochi and Mattancherry. Some of the most interesting buildings in India are to be found here, including old Portuguese, Dutch and British architecture. Today it is a laid-back neighbourhood where murals adorn the streets, Chinese fishing nets dot the water, and heritage building have been reborn as cool cafes, chic boutiques and contemporary art galleries.

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**DAY 16 • Historic Kochi:** We will start at the Mattancherry Palace (tentatively listed for UNESCO World Heritage status) to see its extraordinary 17<sup>th</sup> century murals, before enjoying the atmospheric streets of Jew Town and enjoying the art galleries and antiques shops that it is known for.

There will be free time this afternoon before we gather for a special farewell dinner to celebrate our journey and reflect on the experiences we have shared.

**Accommodation:** *Eighth Bastion, Fort Kochi (Bastion Room)* | *Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner*

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**DAY 17 • Kochi – home:** Enjoy a relaxed morning before we check out of the hotel by 11am, marking the end of our tour. You will then be transferred in an air-conditioned car to the airport for your departure flight home.

**Meals:** *Breakfast*



KOCHI: COLONIAL DUTCH ARCHITECTURE, STREET MURALS, A KATHAKALI PERFORMANCE, ANTIQUE SHOPPING AND THE CHINESE FISHING NETS

## MEET YOUR HOST: NICOLE COURT

### AN ARTISTIC JOURNEY THROUGH SOUTH INDIA WITH A DESIGNER

Join Sydney-based designer Nicole Court on an immersive, 16-night journey through South India's intricate beauty, layered history, and living traditions.

This one-of-a-kind tour, handcrafted by Nicole in collaboration with local experts, invites you to explore South India through a designer's lens – from historic homes and lush gardens to workshops, temples, and quiet corners of architectural wonder. With her thoughtful eye, deep respect for craftsmanship, and warm, personal approach, Nicole creates space for real connections – not just to places, but to the people who shape them.

This is not a typical tour. It is an invitation to see more, feel more, and slow down – in the company of like-minded travellers and a host who has spent a lifetime chasing beauty and meaning around the world.

### ABOUT NICOLE COURT

Nicole Court is a multi-disciplinary designer with more than three decades of experience spanning textiles, interiors, homewares, publishing and landscape design. Her creative path has led her repeatedly to India, Sri Lanka and across Asia and the world, always guided by a deep appreciation for craftsmanship, history and the quietly extraordinary.

For over a decade, her textile and homeware collections – handcrafted in India to her designs – were stocked by leading boutique stores throughout Australia and New Zealand, and featured regularly in *Belle*, *Vogue Living*, *Inside Out*, *Gourmet Traveller*, *House & Garden* and *Marie Claire*.

Today, Nicole focuses on curating immersive cultural journeys and creative projects that draw on her decades of design experience and long-standing relationships across the region. Whether shaping an itinerary or collaborating on a new venture, she brings the same refined sensibility: thoughtful, tactile and effortlessly elegant.

### A FAMILY TRADITION OF TRAVEL AND DESIGN

Nicole's connection to Asia – and particularly to India – is both personal and generational. Her aunt, Robin Duffecy, a writer, stylist, advertising creative, publisher and interior designer, lived in Delhi and formed close friendships with many of the country's leading creative minds. Over time, those friendships became Nicole's as well, evolving naturally across generations and forming part of the fabric of her own life and work.

Over more than three decades of travelling to India, designing and producing her homewares collections, and leading tours throughout the region, Nicole has also cultivated her own network of artists, collectors, writers and designers. Together, these longstanding connections form the foundation of the journeys she curates – offering access, insight and authenticity that only time and trust can create.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Design-led discovery: Explore South India's architectural treasures, lush gardens, and rich artistic traditions with a designer, revealing the stories and details behind each place.
- Meaningful encounters: Meet local artists, curators, and creatives in private settings – from home studios to heritage houses.
- Beautifully balanced: Enjoy a curated pace with time for conversation, contemplation, and every comfort thoughtfully chosen.
- A personal touch: This tour reflects Nicole's passion, insight, and care – and is designed to feel more like travelling with a generous friend than a tour leader.

Join Nicole Court on a unique and intimate exploration of South India – where art, design, and culture come together in ways that are deeply inspiring and quietly unforgettable.

*Instagram: @nicolecourtdesign*



NICOLE COURT

## TOUR DETAILS

### How to Reserve Your Place

To secure your place on this journey, please request a Booking Form from:

[nicole@nicolecourt.com.au](mailto:nicole@nicolecourt.com.au)

Your booking is confirmed upon receipt of your completed form and the **AUD \$1,000 deposit**.

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### Payment Schedule

The following payment schedule applies:

- **At time of booking**  
AUD \$1,000 deposit
- **28 August 2026**  
Additional payment due, bringing your total paid to **25%** of the tour cost
- **28 September 2026**  
Final balance of **75%** due

### For later bookings:

- Bookings after **28 August 2026** require a **25%** payment
  - Bookings after **28 September 2026** require **full payment** at time of booking
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### Tour Dates

#### Design Tour to South India

**4 – 20 January 2027**

17 Days | 16 Nights

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### Inclusions

Your journey has been designed for comfort, ease and enrichment. The following is included:

- 16 nights carefully selected hotel accommodation
  - All meals, beverages and minibar as outlined in the itinerary
  - Private airport arrival and departure transfers
  - Ground transport by air-conditioned coach and private vehicles with expert drivers
  - Complimentary bottled or filtered water throughout the tour and in all hotels
  - Specialist local guides at key destinations
  - Tour leadership by **Nicole Court** and full support from your accompanying Indian tour manager
  - Entrance fees, monument charges, taxes and all gratuities
  - 24/7 support from our experienced Indian travel team
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### Exclusions

The following items are not included:

- International flights
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Alcoholic beverages
- Visa costs

### Exclusions (continued)

- Comprehensive travel and health insurance (required)
  - Medical expenses
  - Costs associated with voluntary or unavoidable itinerary changes
  - Personal expenses such as snacks, laundry, telephone calls and internet
  - Video camera fees at certain museums and sites
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### Cancellation Terms

Should you need to cancel your booking, please notify us in writing by email.

- Cancellations **before 28 August 2026**: deposit is retained
  - Cancellations **after 28 August 2026**: 25% cancellation fee
  - Cancellations **after 28 September 2026**: 100% cancellation fee
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### Minimum Numbers

This tour requires a minimum of **8 guests** by **28 August 2026** to proceed.

- Please wait for written confirmation before booking flights (or ensure flights are refundable). If minimum numbers are not met, you will be notified on **31 August 2026**.
  - The tour may then be cancelled or re-costed.
  - If re-costed, you may accept the new cost or cancel your booking within 1 day of notification.
  - If the tour is cancelled — or if you choose not to proceed with a revised cost — you may elect to receive either a **full refund** of all payments (including deposit) or a **credit** toward future arrangements, processed within **5 business days**.
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### Booking Terms & Conditions

For full details, please refer to the

**“Design Tour to South India January 2027 Booking Form with Terms and Conditions.”**

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### Medical

All hotels have access to on-call doctors should assistance be required.

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### Dietary Requirements

We are pleased to accommodate dietary needs wherever possible.

Please advise us at the time of booking so arrangements can be made in advance.

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### Flexibility

This itinerary has been crafted with great care.

However, travel in India occasionally requires minor adjustments.

If an activity must move to a different day, or if a site is unexpectedly closed, an alternative of equal interest and quality will be arranged.

## TESTIMONIALS

**I HAVE NOW DONE TWO TOURS WITH NICKY.** Two unforgettable, wow every single day, in fact, often multiple times a day, wow! moments. It was evident from the moment I landed in Delhi, warmly greeted, walked through the airport, onto a waiting bus and into the comfort of the first of many beautiful hotels. All the way through to the moment I flew out again, filled to the brim with awe and delight.

Every single detail of the tour was thoughtfully curated. Nicky is a natural curator. Her attention to detail. Her love of all things India. Her passion for authentic human experiences all shine through with grace and love. Yes, love. I feel spoilt by my two incredible tours through India with Nicky. I'm not sure there is any other way to do it now!

**Sally, Sydney**

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**NICOLE COURT'S DESIGN TOUR WAS A LUXURY TRAVEL EXPERIENCE THAT CANNOT BE MATCHED.** Travelling with my sister, for my 50th birthday present, this tour was a complete success for me; the places we travelled to, the experiences that were curated and timed perfectly to build up our understanding of this complex and wonderful and diverse culture and place. I experienced utter beauty and fulfillment in many forms, be it the world class hotels, food or seamlessly planned activities.

Mostly it was a wonderful human experience, feeling safe and totally cared for, allowed me to confidently explore this foreign country, supported and connected to both Nicky and our guides, and finding new connections with a fantastic tour group that have ensured I have some wonderful new friends for life. I cannot recommend Nicole Court's Design Tours highly enough.

**Jacqui Williams, Perth**

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**THE METICULOUS PLANNING OF THE DESIGN TOUR TO INDIA,** the attention to detail, lovely surprises along the way, and our extremely knowledgeable guides all made this experience incredibly enlightening, where history, creativity and spirituality entwined, an unforgettable adventure for anyone passionate about design, textiles and architecture.

Spice scents, tiles, saris, hand-painted walls, incense, etched glass, hand-blocked prints, and temple bells have left an indelible mark on my soul. I feel completely spoilt and privileged to have been. It far exceeded all my expectations. I would go again in a heartbeat with Nicole and the team. Highly recommended. A huge thank you. Heart open.

**Suzanne Maher, Bellingen NSW**

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**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE MOST MAGICAL AND AMAZING TRIP.** We were so well looked after at every moment and felt so safe, secure and well supported. Mum is still buzzing from the trip and her face lights up when people ask her about it. I've made us a photo book and she's showing everyone. Such great memories for us both to treasure.

It was also really special to spend time with you and watch you work and weave your magic. You have a real gift for what you do and you always operate with such grace, authenticity and a real sense of ease and calm. And fun!! So many giggles and so much fun. I can really feel the love in what you do - even though I know it's not always as easy as you make it look.

**Lara Esden, Sydney**

**I'VE BEEN TO NORTH INDIA TWICE BEFORE**, but doing a tour with Nicky Court on her Design Tour is by FAR the best way to see India. You see the best of the best along with the chaos, but knowing you are safe and well taken care of. Just sit back and trust! There was something wonderful in every day along with pleasant surprises. We saw the most unique places, beautiful palaces, tombs, and ruins along with how the masses live on the streets, compatibly with cows, dogs, elephants, camels, donkeys, goats, sheep, bicycles, rickshaws, tuk-tuks, motor bikes, cars, buses, and trucks. The two most challenging components are the air and water quality but that faded as we basked in the glow of all that was so wonderful!!

**MJ, Sydney**

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**FROM THE EXTRAORDINARY STEPWELLS IN AHMEDABAD**, to the spotted leopard spotting, the textile exhibitions and the fabulous palaces of Rajasthan, the India tour was full of surprises and “wow” moments. Along the way the accommodation was superb and the company great fun. Nicky and her team went to no end of trouble to ensure everything went smoothly and that we got the most out of all our visits. Grateful for the opportunity to learn so much about Indian architecture and culture from our expert guides. Highly recommended!

**Anne W, Sydney**

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- What would you do again: All of it
- Funniest moment: Hooning around in tuk-tuks wherever we were
- Favourite hotels: RAAS Jodhpur, RAAS Chhatrasagar and Samode Haveli, Jaipur
- Best meal: The food everywhere was amazing, but it was also about the gin and tonic
- Most enjoyable experience: The colours and the textiles (especially the Calico Museum and the Anokhi Museum), architecture in Ahmedabad, the leopard adventure, the stepwell dinner, bird watching on the lake, palace visits, and the shopping in Jaipur!!

**Sarah Ogilvie, Melbourne**

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**IT WAS AN AMAZING TRIP** and I would recommend it to other Kiwis and Aussies – I feel that it was the right balance for us and Nicky knows what we want. Going in the winter is highly recommended. The trip was well run and organised. All the hotels were good. Highly recommend this trip to anyone wanting an informative trip to India with no hassles.

**Michelle, New Zealand**

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**NICKY TOOK US ALL ON A MAGIC CARPET RIDE** through Calcutta and India's North-East on her Design Tour. I have been to India many times, and I have been on a lot of group tours – this was one of the best I have experienced. Nicky was a great host and showed us things we would never have discovered ourselves, in a less travelled part of India.

**Susan B, Sydney**

**TRAVELLING WITH ‘DIETARY REQUIREMENTS’** was not a problem with Nicky as our leader. She ensured that all our accommodation chefs were warned in advance and I never ever had an upset stomach. This is a small example of the attention to detail and care Nicky takes in planning her tours. Not to mention the wonderful places and people we saw, and accommodation we stayed in. I highly recommend Nicky’s Design Tour.

**Karen Robinson, Sydney**

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**I’VE RECENTLY RETURNED FROM INDIA** and was fortunate enough to be part of Nicky Court’s Design Tour. As I was travelling alone, I did have some reservations about how I would manage, never having been to India before and being a little nervous in unfamiliar places. Fortunately, everything was taken care of with thoughtfulness and care. From the moment I alighted the plane until the moment I boarded to return home everything was looked after. The detail of what we did down to where the next clean bathroom would be, were all taken care of. I enjoyed hearing about the history of beautiful buildings. We experienced delicious meals in beautiful locations, from a Mughal-inspired garden to a step well, lit with hundreds of candles. The timing of our glamping in the beautiful wilderness park was impeccable. After a week of taking in so much history, culture and horns beeping it was lovely to enjoy the solitude and see the stars. Nicky is a kind and gracious woman whose care for others made the trip what it was. Her humbleness and willingness to help with any issue made everything seamless and stress free for the guests. Her knowledge and cultural insight was fantastic and we were well informed throughout the trip, much has stayed with me as I’ve settled back into life at home. Thank you for everything, I would highly recommend any trip to India that Nicky would organise.

**Carla M, Sydney**

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**MY TRIP TO INDIA** with Nicole Court was just magical. Her knowledge and care and kindness for us all was outstanding. I have been to India many times but never like this. A small group of like-minded travellers, some were travelling to India for the first time. Everything was organised so it was hassle free. At times India can overwhelm but there was a great mix of excursions and relaxation. We stayed in luxury small hotels and palaces which were divine. I cannot recommend this trip highly enough or India. India’s people, culture, customs are intoxicating and with Nicole you are immersed fully. Thank you so much.

**Denise Wright, Melbourne**

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**NICOLE’S INTRICATE DETAILED ITINERARY** allowed us the privilege of experiencing unique insights into the personal lives of those connected to art and culture. Traversing through the backstreets, inhaling the flower market scenes, witnessing artisans at work...Nicole certainly gets the balance right: exploring and seeing the essence of each place, as well as having some peaceful times in nature. Nicole and her “on-ground” experienced network gave us a sense of inclusiveness and fine hospitality. Indeed, trust is the word to have as one’s mantra, allowing the serendipitous adventure to unfold.

**Jane Grossberg, Sydney**

**I HAVE COME BACK TO EARTH AFTER THE WONDERFUL TRIP YOU ORGANISED FOR US.** I feel privileged to have travelled with you in such an understated and interesting way, just how I like it. We could never have envisaged an itinerary like that so thank you. You did it all with calm efficiency. Aditya was very kind and helpful to us. And the driver, what a man, not a worrying moment as he weaved his way amongst all that life along the roads.

**Sophie Wilson, Sydney**

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**THANK YOU FOR A MEMORABLE HOLIDAY.** I was conscious (but not too) of the hard work that you put in to make it so. On reflection it is hard to pinpoint single events as all the days were so individually rewarding, rather like a colossal film set on a Cecile B. DeMille scale.

Just riding on the coach with kaleidoscopic images of village and road life was fascinating enough to say nothing of the set pieces which will live in both our memories. To cap it all my scepticism about seeing tigers in the wild (a private childhood fantasy bound up with Jim Corbett) was fully bowled at Panna.

We have done a lot of travel in our lives, at coffee today we both reflected that this trip was right up there and gave some insight into Robin and your fascination with the place.

It is no surprise after absorbing *The Golden Road* that India was a very major influence of cultures East and West well before the birth of Christ and will continue to be. We eschewed our hippy peers all those years ago who left to pay homage and I take all that back.

I acknowledge how much personal insight, attention to detail, romance and good taste that endowed this trip, thank you for allowing us to share it.

**TW, Sydney**

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**ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT IS THE NEXT TOUR I WILL DO WITH NICOLE COURT.** I don't think there is any better recommendation for a travel experience than that. I have just returned from her Design & Architectural Tour of Southern India and am still processing all the amazing places and experiences, and, of course, the several thousand photographs I took along the way.

As a first timer in India, it was incredibly reassuring to be guided by Nicole and her outstanding team of local experts. Every detail was thoughtfully handled, from the beautiful hotels, delicious meals, seamless transportation, unforgettable excursions, and visits with remarkable artisans. She also shared tips on shopping, spa treatments, and much more. But as Nicole says, you do have to leave room for the unexpected in India, and those were the magical things that can't be pre-planned but give such joy.

Each day was a completely new experience and feast for the senses. I totally fell under India's spell and that is entirely due to Nicole's ability to lead us to the best southern India has to offer. People keep asking me for my top 3 highlights, but that's impossible – every single day was full of them.

**Laura Reid, Sydney**