Art | Architecture | Gardens | Textiles | History

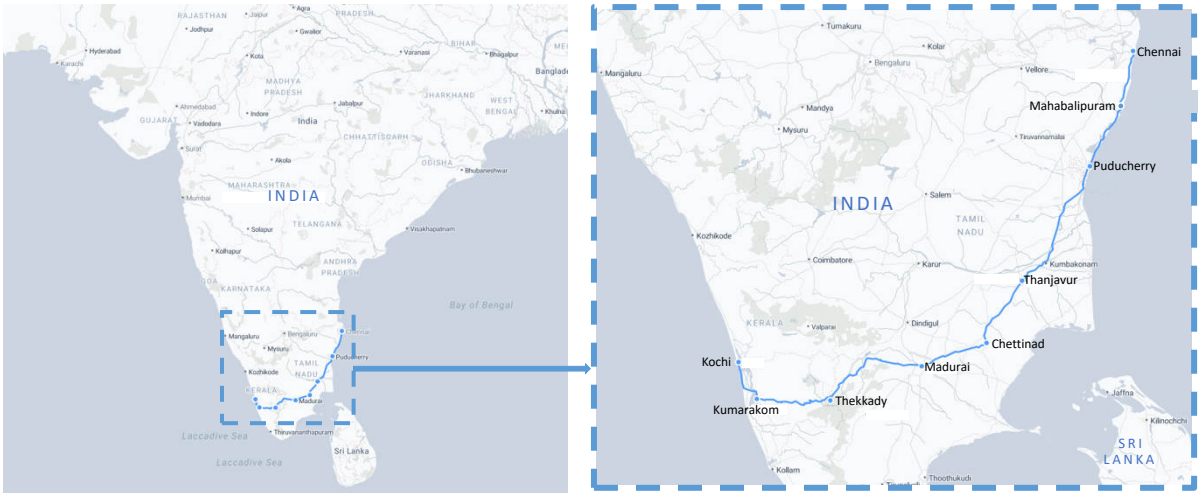
South India Design Tour

From the bougainvillea-lined streets of French colonial Puducherry through the ancient Hindu heartland of Tamil Nadu, the lush tea and spice plantations of Kerala and its tranquil backwaters, this journey concludes in Kochi with the cutting-edge contemporary art of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale

South India

5–21 January 2028

Bookings Close 28 August 2027



AT A GLANCE

Dates
- 5th to 21st January 2028 (17 days, 16 nights)

Hotels
- Taj Fisherman's Cove Resort, Chennai
- Palais de Mahe, Puducherry
- The Lotus Palace, Chettinad
- Visalam, Chettinad
- Heritage Madurai, Madurai
- Spice Village, Thekkady
- Coconut Lagoon, Kumarakom
- Eighth Bastion, Kochi

Meals
- Breakfasts daily (16), lunches (1), afternoon teas (7) and dinners (1)

Transport
- Air-conditioned private vehicles
- Boats for exploring Periyar Tiger Reserve and Kerala's backwaters

Your Hosts
- Tour leader: designer, Nicole Court (Sydney based)
- Tour manager (India based)
- Specialist local guides

Group size
- Small group, typically around 12 guests

Pricing
- AUD$15,950 per person, twin share
- AUD$6,500 single supplement

Bookings
- 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)

Itinerary Highlights
- Curated excursions exploring South India's art, architecture, landscape, textiles, crafts and cultural history
- Walking the bougainvillea-lined streets of French-colonial Puducherry
- Discovering UNESCO World Heritage-listed temples and monuments
- Experiencing the vibrant Pongal festival in Madurai
- Exploring spice plantations in the lush hills of the Western Ghats
- Cruising Kerala's tranquil backwaters and exploring Periyar National Park
- Staying in some of South India's most beautiful hotels, including a Geoffrey Bawa-designed retreat and exquisite Chettinad mansions
- Immersing ourselves in the contemporary art of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale

Best time of year to visit?
- December and January have the coolest temperatures – sunny 28°C to 32°C days and balmy 20°C evenings make for lovely travelling weather

NICOLE COURT (TOP LEFT); PUDUCHERRY

MEET YOUR HOST: NICOLE COURT

FOR MORE THAN THREE DECADES, I HAVE EXPLORED THE INTERSECTION OF ART, CRAFT, CULTURE AND PLACE. As a designer and curator, my career has been shaped by a deep appreciation of craftsmanship, beauty and the stories embedded within the objects, buildings and landscapes we encounter.

My work as a multi-disciplinary designer has spanned textiles, interiors, homewares, publishing and landscape design. For more than a decade, I designed and produced textile and homeware collections handcrafted in India, which were sold through leading boutiques across Australia and New Zealand and featured regularly in *Belle*, *Vogue Living, House & Garden, Gourmet Traveller, Marie Claire* and *Inside Out.*

My connection with India is both professional and deeply personal. My aunt, Robin Duffecy, lived in Delhi for many years and developed close friendships with some of India's leading artists, designers, writers and creative families. Over the past three decades, those friendships became mine as well, giving me a window into India's creative world and a network of relationships across the region.

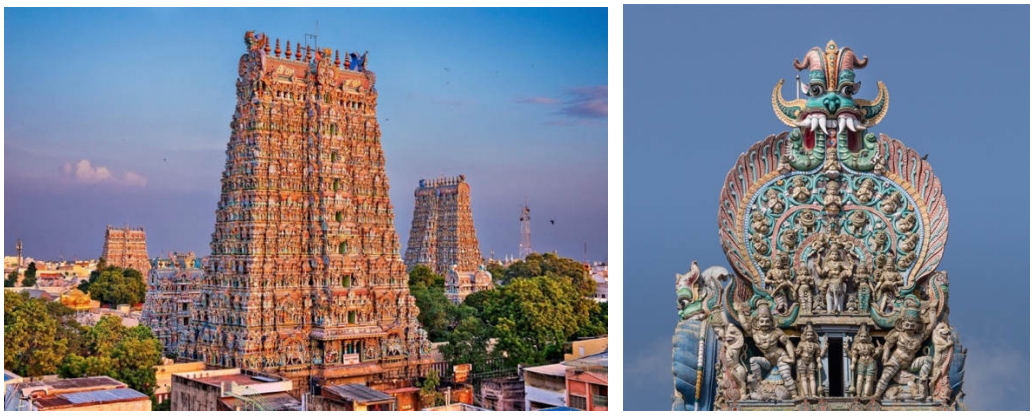
Travelling with me is about much more than visiting beautiful places. I am fascinated by the way culture, spirituality, craftsmanship and the natural environment shape the way people live and the places they create. I look at each destination through the lens of art, architecture, textiles, craftsmanship, spirituality and place to discover the stories, meaning and connections that make them come alive. I love sharing the details that might otherwise remain hidden – the meaning behind a pattern, the hands and traditions behind an object, the symbolism within a building, or the story of the person who created it.

I believe the most memorable journeys are shaped by meaningful encounters – with interesting people, beautiful objects and places that reveal themselves slowly. This is why I seek out experiences that take us beyond the obvious, introducing you to artists, artisans, designers and local experts whose knowledge brings a deeper understanding to the places we visit.

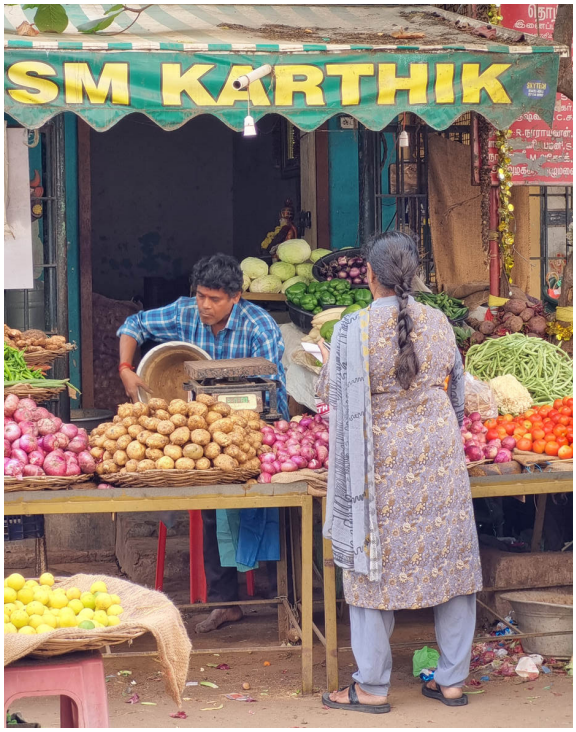
I design every itinerary as though I were travelling with close friends. Small groups, thoughtful pacing, beautiful hotels and exceptional access allow us to experience each destination in a way that feels personal and immersive. I choose hotels and heritage properties that have a genuine connection to their surroundings – places with character, history and a strong sense of place, where the setting becomes part of the experience.

To me, the greatest luxury is travelling with the confidence that the details have been taken care of, while remaining open to the unexpected moments that make a journey memorable.

Instagram: @nicolecourtdesign



THE HOLY CITY OF MADURAI



TAMIL QUARTER, PUDUCHERRY

INTRODUCTION

SOUTH INDIA IS A WORLD OF ANCIENT TEMPLES, VIBRANT TEXTILES, FRAGRANT SPICES AND EXTRAORDINARY ARTISTIC TRADITIONS. At dawn, temple bells ring out, incense drifts through ancient stone corridors, and women in vivid saris adorn their hair with fragrant jasmine. Sacred rituals remain woven into daily life, while the region's artistic heritage tells a story of centuries of cultural exchange. Indian textiles were once among the world's most valuable trading commodities, connecting East and West through coastal ports where merchants arrived from distant lands – from the Roman Empire to the East India Company.

You are invited to join me in January 2028 for an Art, Architecture & Design Tour to South India. Together, we will uncover South India's exquisite cultural expressions: from Tamil temples and palaces, traditional crafts and Puducherry's French-colonial architecture. This immersive journey offers 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 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 glimpse its once-majestic grandeur in the now-abandoned mansions of merchant princes. In Thekkady's highlands, we will meet spice growers and tea planters before descending to Kerala's backwaters. I will guide us through private homes and studios, sharing 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 as we float past on boats; Kathakali dancers applying intricate make-up; rolling hills carpeted in tea bushes; and Periyar's lake reflecting the sky. The accommodations are equally transportive. Imagine staying in Puducherry's charming French Quarter; swimming in a stepped, temple-style pool designed by Geoffrey Bawa, renowned for his Tropical Modernist architecture; staying in an Art Deco mansion surrounded by lush gardens; or enjoying afternoon tea served from a boat while staying in a traditional wooden Keralan house on the lake. Each property offers its own rhythm, rooted in its setting and in harmony with local culture.

This is an opportunity to experience a deeper South India – a journey shaped by creativity, culture and meaningful encounters, rather than simply a holiday.

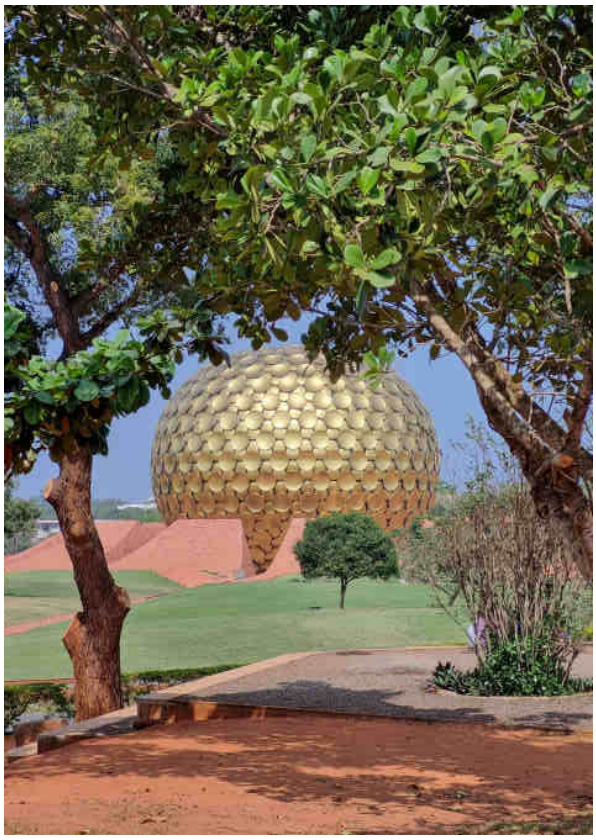
My tours are deliberately personal in scale, with typically around 12 guests. This allows us to travel at a considered pace and enjoy intimate encounters with the artists, craftspeople, curators, chefs and local experts who bring each place to life.

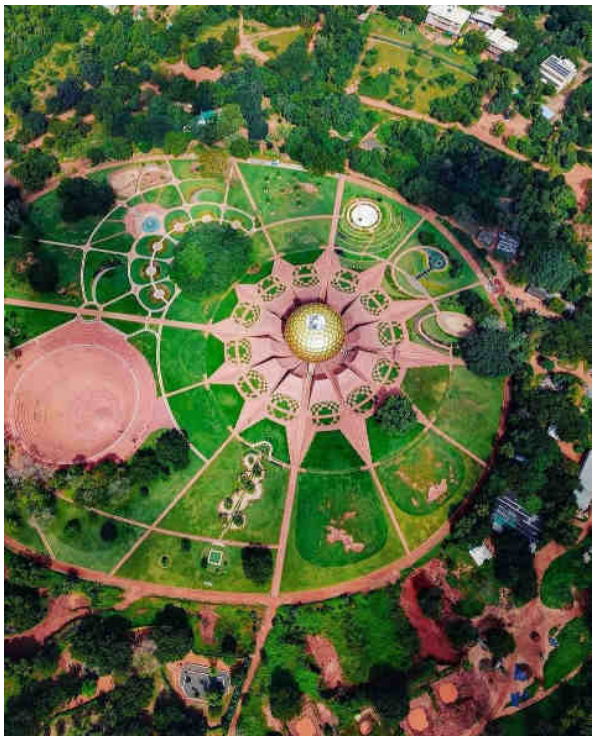
Whether you are drawn to textiles, gardens, architecture, traditional crafts or simply the pleasure of discovering somewhere new, this journey offers a rich and rewarding way to experience South India through a designer's eye.

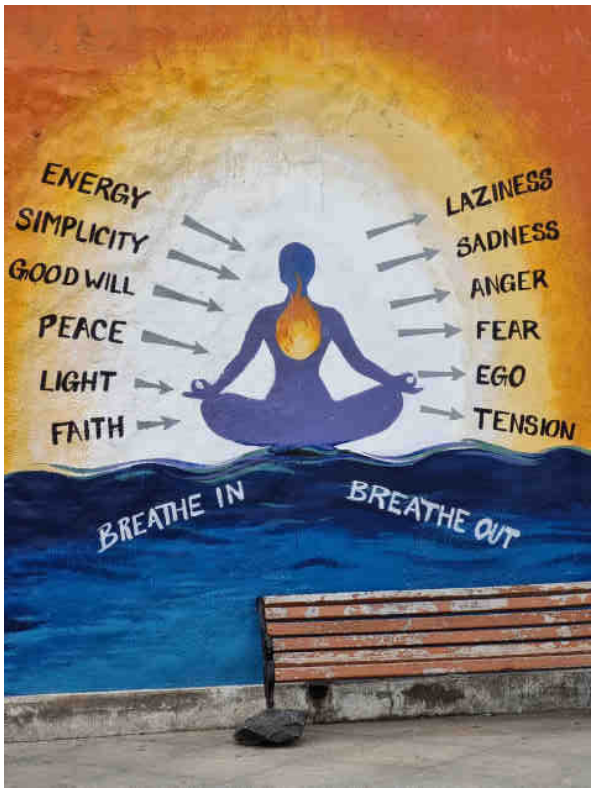
Every property and partner is selected with intention. Our hotels are part of a small community of hoteliers and heritage custodians who understand luxury as an immersive, responsible experience. They share common values:

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

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






ENERGY
SIMPLICITY
GOOD WILL
PEACE
LIGHT
FAITH
LAZINESS
SADNESS
ANGER
FEAR
EGO
TENSION
BREATHE IN
BREATHE OUT

AUROVILLE

SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

Wander through French-colonial Puducherry
Explore one of India's most distinctive coastal towns, where leafy streets, bougainvillea, colourful colonial villas, boutiques and cafés reveal the meeting of French and Tamil cultures.

Discover South India's great temple architecture
Visit extraordinary sacred sites, from the UNESCO World Heritage-listed monuments of Mahabalipuram to the magnificent Brihadeeswarar Temple at Thanjavur and Madurai's spectacular Meenakshi Amman Temple, each revealing a different chapter in South Indian temple architecture.

Celebrate Pongal
Experience the colour, devotion and joyful traditions of Tamil Nadu's great harvest festival. Encounter pilgrims at sacred temples, create auspicious kolams and take part in the preparation of the Pongal pot, celebrating abundance, gratitude and the year ahead.

Experience the architectural splendour of Chettinad
Spend four nights exploring this remarkable architectural region. Discover grand merchant mansions, decorative arts and traditional craftsmanship, meet local artisans, browse antique shops and savour the secrets of Chettinad cuisine.

Meet South India's master artisans
Visit handloom weavers, tile makers and other skilled craftspeople, gaining insight into traditional techniques and knowledge passed down through generations.

Discover Kerala's spice country
Explore the cool hills of the Western Ghats, walk through spice plantations, learn about tea production during a private estate visit and discover the flavours that shape Kerala's cuisine.

Cruise Periyar National Park
Enjoy a peaceful morning cruise across the lake, surrounded by forested hills and birdlife, offering a tranquil contrast to India's bustling cities and temple towns.

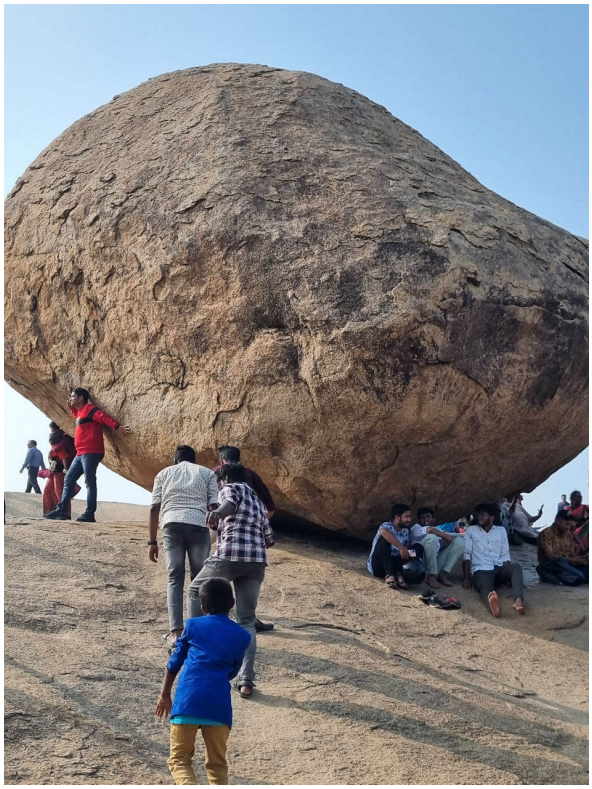
Relax in Kerala's beautiful backwaters
Travel by boat to your lakeside retreat on Vembanad Lake, where coconut palms, quiet waterways and abundant birdlife invite you to slow down and enjoy Kerala's gentler rhythm.

Go behind the scenes of Kathakali
Watch performers prepare their elaborate make-up and costumes before a traditional Kathakali performance, gaining insight into Kerala's celebrated classical dance-drama.

Explore Kochi's historic and creative spirit
Discover a cosmopolitan port city shaped by Portuguese, Dutch, Jewish and British influences. Visit Mattancherry Palace, wander the atmospheric Jewish Quarter, browse galleries and antique shops, and enjoy Fort Kochi's cafés and boutiques.

Experience the Kochi-Muziris Biennale
Immerse yourself in cutting-edge contemporary art at India's leading international art biennale, where artists transform Kochi's historic buildings and spaces into a vibrant city-wide celebration of art and ideas.

Stay in exceptional heritage hotels
Enjoy a thoughtfully chosen collection of hotels rich in architecture, history and character, from a restored French-colonial mansion and a 250-year-old Chettinad palace to a magnificent Art Deco mansion, Geoffrey Bawa's celebrated Heritage Madurai, a spice-garden retreat, a tranquil lakeside hideaway reached by boat and a boutique hotel in historic Fort Kochi.



MAMALLAPURAM – UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE-LISTED MONUMENTS

ITINERARY

A 16-night Insider Journey with Nicole Court

Art | Architecture | Spices | Textiles | History

DAY 1 • JANUARY 5

Arrival in Chennai: Upon arrival at Chennai International Airport, my friendly local representative will meet you and escort you to your private, air-conditioned car for the journey to our seaside retreat, approximately 1 hour 10 minutes from the airport. Check-in is available from 2pm.

Welcome Afternoon Tea: This afternoon, we will gather for a relaxed welcome afternoon tea on the veranda – an opportunity to meet your fellow travellers and your host, Nicole Court, and settle into the journey ahead.

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

Taj Fisherman's Cove Resort

Located on the Bay of Bengal, Taj Fisherman's Cove is a relaxed tropical retreat surrounded by gardens and overlooking the sea. Its coastal setting provides a gentle introduction to South India.

TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu is home to one of the world's great living classical civilisations, with a cultural history stretching back more than two millennia. Its heritage remains vibrantly alive in the Tamil language, classical dance, poetry, music and, above all, its extraordinary Hindu temples.

Across the state, towering temple gateways rise above towns and villages, while the Coromandel Coast bears traces of centuries of international trade and cultural exchange. Roman traders, European merchants and the British East India Company all left their mark on this ancient landscape.

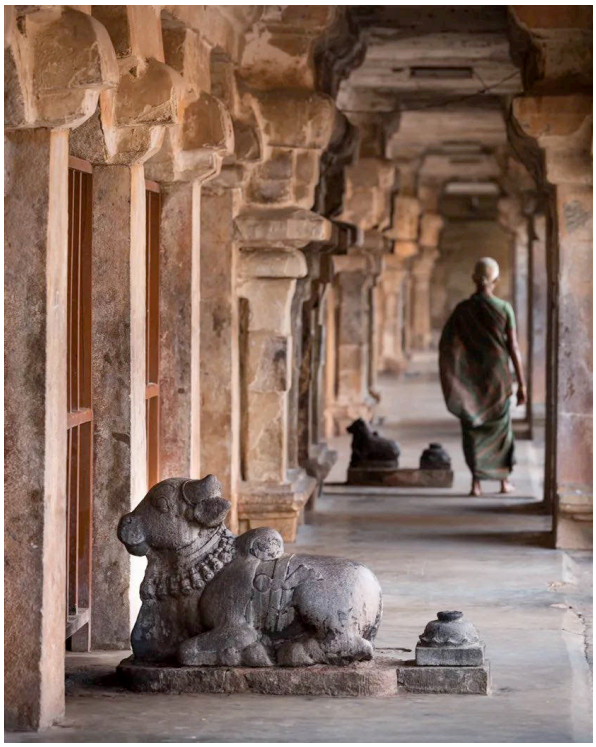
There is a distinct sense of otherness to Tamil Nadu. Its language, traditions and Dravidian architectural heritage are unlike anywhere else in India, and ancient culture exists alongside a rapidly changing modern world — from thriving technology and film industries to contemporary design, art and cuisine.

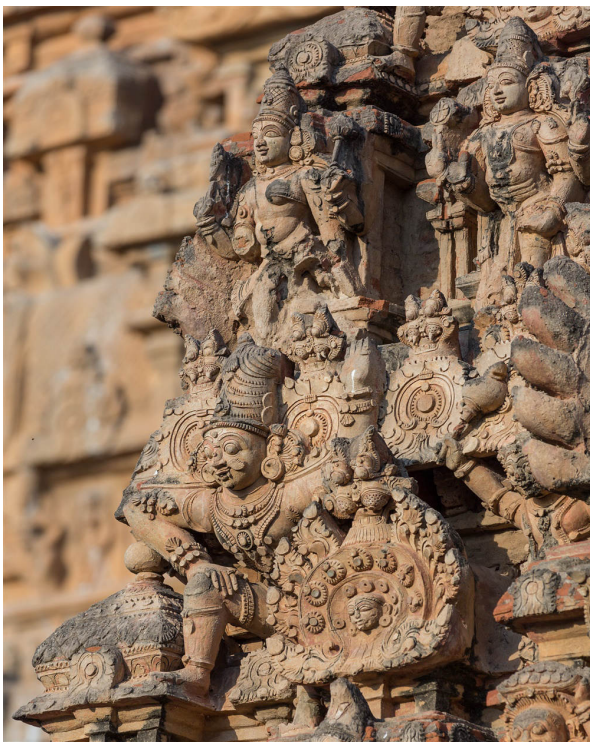
DAY 2 • JANUARY 6

Mahabalipuram's UNESCO World Heritage Site: Our first exploration takes us to Mahabalipuram, approximately 20 minutes from the hotel. Once a major Pallava seaport during the 7th and 8th centuries, this tranquil coastal town is now home to one of India's most remarkable collections of rock-cut architecture.

The monuments of Mahabalipuram reveal the extraordinary skill and imagination of the Pallava artisans, who carved temples, sculptures and entire compositions directly from the granite landscape. Among the highlights is the Descent of the Ganges, an immense open-air bas-relief depicting the descent of the sacred river to earth.

We will also visit the famous Shore Temple, dramatically positioned beside the Bay of Bengal. According to local legend, the Shore Temple was one of seven temples that once stood here, with the others claimed by the sea. The legend acquired new resonance after the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, when the sea temporarily receded and revealed previously submerged stone structures offshore.





THANJAVUR: UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE-LISTED BRIHADISHWARA TEMPLE (c. 1010AD)

Mahabalipuram to Puducherry: After exploring Mahabalipuram, we continue south along the Coromandel Coast to Puducherry, approximately two hours away.

Once a French colony, Puducherry is one of India's most atmospheric towns, with elegant colonial buildings, tree-lined streets and a distinctly relaxed coastal character.

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

Palais de Mahe

Located in the heart of Puducherry's charming French Quarter, Palais de Mahe combines colonial character with contemporary comforts. The hotel is just steps from the seafront promenade, with a serene central pool and a rooftop terrace overlooking the French Quarter towards the sea. It is my favourite hotel in Puducherry.

PUDUCHERRY

Until 1954, Puducherry was part of French India, and the legacy of its colonial past remains wonderfully visible. French street names, colourful villas, shuttered windows and bougainvillea-clad doorways give the French Quarter its distinctive character.

Today, the town has developed a lively creative culture, with cafés, restaurants, galleries and boutiques occupying many of its historic buildings. Local artisanal products, textiles and crafts sit comfortably alongside contemporary design, while traces of its French past remain woven into everyday life.

DAY 3 • JANUARY 7

Puducherry – Exploring the Tamil Quarter: This morning we experience everyday life in Puducherry with a visit to Goubert Market. The market is a riot of colour, fragrance and activity, with women selling fresh fish, mountains of dried chillies and spices, displays of local produce, banana leaves and coconuts, and flower sellers threading garlands for temples and homes.

Exploring the French Quarter: This afternoon, we explore the elegant, tree-lined streets of the French Quarter, discovering its distinctive architecture and some of the town's quieter corners. We will visit a beautiful church whose interior is a meditation in colour, with stained-glass windows opening onto flower-filled gardens.

Afterwards, there will also be time to browse Puducherry's boutiques and galleries or linger over a coffee at one of its many atmospheric cafés.

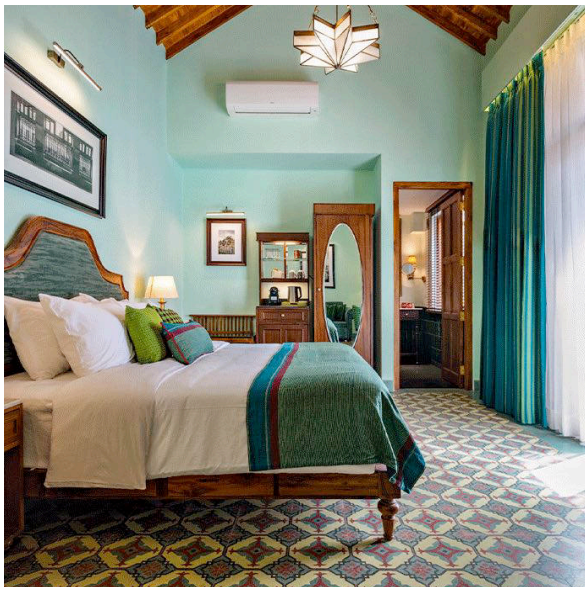
Accommodation: *Palais de Mahe, Puducherry (Palais Chambre Deluxe) | Meals included: Breakfast*

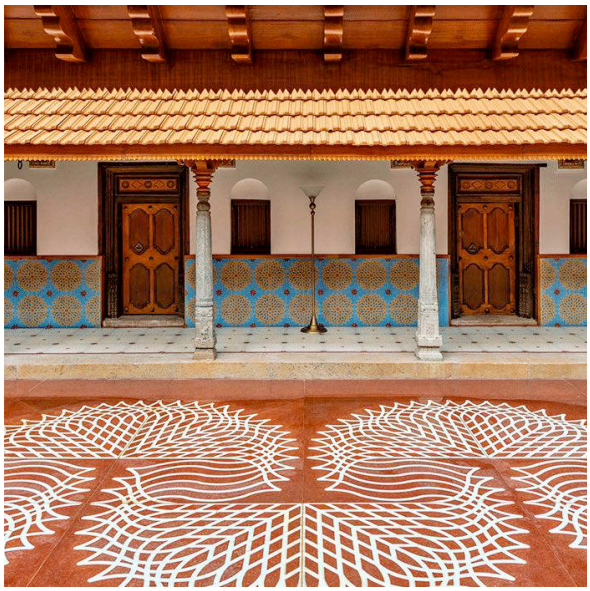
DAY 4 • JANUARY 8

Auroville – Architecture, Landscape and Idealism: This morning we travel approximately 30 minutes to Auroville, the experimental international township founded in 1968 with the ideal of creating a community dedicated to human unity, peace and conscious living.

At its centre is the Matrimandir, a golden sphere surrounded by gardens. Designed in the late 1960s, it was conceived as a place for silent contemplation and is the architectural and spiritual heart of the township.

The Matrimandir is surrounded by twelve gardens, each representing a different quality – including Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Light, Life, Power, Wealth, Utility, Progress, Youth, Harmony and Perfection.





THE LOTUS PALACE, CHETTINAD

Auroville's architecture and landscape were conceived around a central idea of integration: buildings and communities radiate from the Matrimandir, with extensive green spaces woven between them and working areas located towards the periphery.

Afternoon at leisure: After our visit, we return to Puducherry. The afternoon is free to relax at the hotel or continue exploring the town at your own pace.

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

DAY 5 • JANUARY 9

Puducherry to Thanjavur: This morning we leave Puducherry and drive approximately three hours to Thanjavur. Formerly known as Tanjore, has been a major cultural centre of South India for more than a thousand years. As the capital of the Chola Empire, it became a centre of architecture, sculpture, painting, music and literature, with Chola influence extending across South India and into Southeast Asia.

Thanjavur's Great Temple Architecture: Our principal visit is the extraordinary Brihadeeswarar Temple, a masterpiece of Chola architecture and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Built in the early 11th century, it represents the pinnacle of the Cholas' architectural and artistic ambition, with its monumental vimana, elaborately carved stonework, sculptural details and vast temple complex.

The temple is also a living place of worship and we will encounter pilgrims making their way here in the days leading up to Pongal, Tamil Nadu's great harvest festival. Pongal is a time of thanksgiving, celebration and renewal, when families give thanks for the harvest and honour the sun, cattle and the land that sustains them.

India's Oldest Library: We will also explore the literary and artistic heritage of Thanjavur at the Saraswathi Mahal Library, one of India's oldest libraries and home to an extraordinary collection of manuscripts and historic texts. Our visit continues to the Art Gallery and Chola Museum, where we will see remarkable collections of Chola bronzes, sculptures, paintings and other works of South Indian art.

Thanjavur to Chettinad: We then continue to Chettinad (approx. 1 hour 45 minutes drive).

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

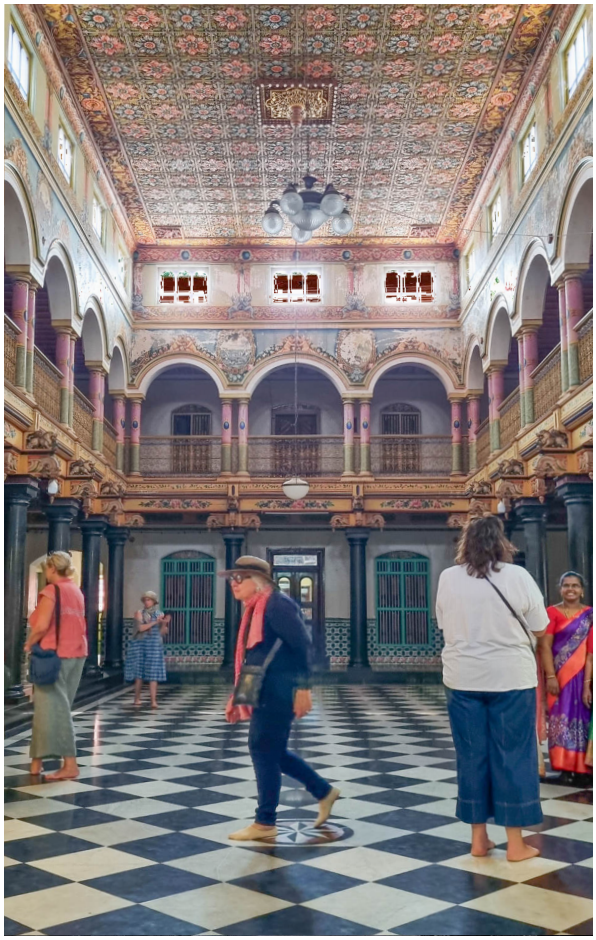
The Lotus Palace, Chettinad

This sensitively restored Chettinad mansion reveals the sophistication of the region's traditional architecture, with courtyards, richly patterned Athangudi tiles, carved teak columns and carefully selected antiques. Its contemporary interpretation of Chettinad style creates an intimate and characterful retreat.

CHETTINAD

Chettinad is the homeland of the Chettiars, a prosperous Tamil merchant and banking community whose fortunes were built across the trading networks of British-era Asia. Their wealth found spectacular expression in the great mansions of Chettinad. Built between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these enormous homes combine Indian traditions with influences gathered from around the world – Burmese teak, Italian marble, Belgian glass, elaborate wood carving, patterned tiles and imported decorative objects.

Thousands of these mansions were built across the region, many occupying entire town blocks. Today, some have been beautifully restored as hotels and museums, while others stand faded



CHETTINAD MANSIONS, A WEAVERS' STUDIO VISIT AND SHOPPING AT THE ANTIQUES MARKETS

and partially abandoned, their extraordinary scale and craftsmanship offering a poignant glimpse into a remarkable chapter of South India's mercantile history. Exploring these houses – with their courtyards, ornate interiors and eclectic international influences – is one of the great pleasures of travelling through Chettinad.

DAY 6 • JANUARY 10

Pre-Pongal festivities: This morning we will have the opportunity to experience a rural pre-Pongal celebration, subject to local availability. This much-loved harvest festival is one of the most important celebrations in the Tamil calendar – a joyful expression of gratitude for the sun, the land, animals and the agricultural cycle. Tradition comes alive through colour, music, ceremony and performance.

The Architectural Splendour of Chettinad: In the afternoon, we will walk from our hotel through the surrounding streets, discovering some of Chettinad's extraordinary mansions. Many now stand quietly abandoned, their elaborate façades and interiors offering a fascinating insight into the wealth and cosmopolitan outlook of the Chettiar community.

AfternoonTea: You may like to finish the afternoon with tea in the Lotus Palace's bijou Red Room (at an additional charge) – an intimate, jewel-like space with Art Deco lounge chairs, Burmese-red walls, patterned china and polished brass objects.

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

DAY 7 • JANUARY 11

The Tiles of Chettinad : This morning we explore one of Chettinad's most magnificent mansions, celebrated for its extraordinary architecture and intricate tiled interiors. We then visit local artisans who continue the region's tradition of handmade tile making, using techniques that have been passed down through generations. The distinctive patterned tiles are one of the defining decorative elements of Chettinad architecture and reflect the region's long history of combining Indian craftsmanship with international influences.

Antique & Vintage Shopping: This afternoon to explore Chettinad's fascinating antique and vintage shops, filled with objects accumulated during the Chettiars' trading years such as enamelware, porcelain, trays, cutlery, spice boxes, kitchen utensils and teapots, alongside old mirrors, lamps, radios and other wonderfully eccentric treasures.

Cooking Class: Chettinad is equally famous for its cuisine, known for its bold spices and aromatic flavours. This afternoon we will have the opportunity to learn about the region's culinary traditions during a hands-on cooking class, preparing some of its characteristic dishes.

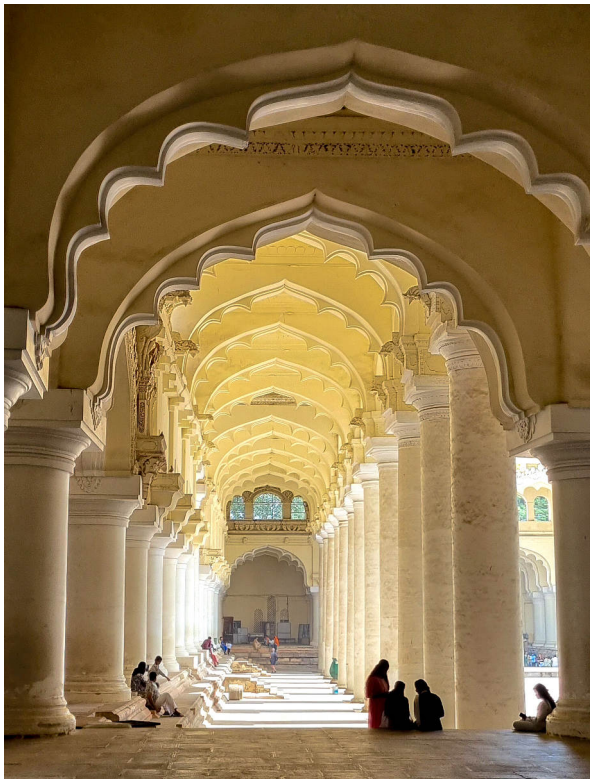
Accommodation: *Visalam (Chettinad Room) | Meals included: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea*

Visalam

This beautifully restored 1930s Art Deco mansion retains the atmosphere of its original family home. Guest rooms feature antique furnishings, vintage photographs and local textiles, while large windows open onto the surrounding gardens. A lovely swimming pool provides a peaceful place to relax.

DAY 8 • JANUARY 12

An Ancient Temple: This morning we visit a Pallava temple dating from the 9th century – a beautiful example of Dravidian temple architecture, with intricate stone carvings, frescoes and ornate pillared halls.



MADURAI

The Sacred Abode of Vishu: We then explore the world of the *Divya Desams*, the 108 sacred abodes of Vishnu that are central to the Vaishnavite tradition. Celebrated in the devotional poetry of the Alvars, the mystic poet-saints of South India, these temples remain important places of pilgrimage.

One of the *Divya Desams* that has left a particularly strong impression on me is Sathyamurthi Perumal Temple at Thirumayam. Here, Vishnu is represented in a remarkable reclining form, carved into the living rock. The temple is believed to date from the Pallava period and is celebrated in the devotional poetry of the Alvars.

What makes this shrine particularly extraordinary is the belief that the deity is self-manifested, rather than created by human hands. The atmosphere inside the dimly lit rock-cut sanctum is deeply atmospheric, and standing before this monumental reclining figure offers a powerful glimpse into the living devotional traditions of Tamil Nadu.

Beside the Vishnu shrine is an ancient Shiva temple, reflecting the intertwining of different traditions within South Indian sacred architecture.

Chettinad Weavers: Afterwards, we visit a nearby handloom weaving unit, where we will see artisans creating beautifully coloured textiles using traditional techniques.

A Sacred Forest Grove: We end the day with a visit to a sacred forest grove, where generations of devotees have left offerings of vividly painted terracotta horses. These evocative groves are often associated with Ayyanar, a guardian deity believed to protect the village and its inhabitants

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

DAY 9 • JANUARY 13
Chettinad to Madurai: This morning we drive approximately two hours to the holy city of Madurai.

Dravidian temple architecture: In the afternoon, we visit the extraordinary Meenakshi Amman Temple, one of the most important living temples in South India and a masterpiece of Dravidian architecture. Dedicated to Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Shiva, the vast complex is renowned for its towering gopurams, or gateways, covered in thousands of vividly painted sculptures.

The brilliant colours of these monumental towers are a defining feature of South Indian temple architecture, transforming the skyline into a kaleidoscope of gods, goddesses, mythical creatures and celestial beings.

Inside, vast pillared halls, shrines and corridors are filled with pilgrims, priests and worshippers. With thousands of devotees passing through the temple each day, this is not simply an architectural monument but a living centre of faith and ritual.

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

Heritage Madurai
Heritage Madurai incorporates the former Madurai Club, whose clubhouse was designed by renowned Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa in the 1970s. Bawa's distinctive style is characterised by a seamless relationship between architecture, landscape and climate. The hotel's serene gardens and traditional temple-inspired sunken pool create a beautiful setting in which to unwind after a day exploring Madurai.

HERITAGE MADURAI (DESIGNED BY GEOFFREY BAWA)

MADURAI

With a history stretching back around 2,500 years, Madurai is one of India's oldest continuously inhabited cities and has long been a centre of Tamil culture, trade and religion. The city developed as an important trading hub, with connections extending as far as the ancient

Mediterranean world. Today, its cultural life remains vibrant, particularly through its traditions of classical music, dance, literature and temple ritual, all centred around the Meenakshi Amman Temple.

DAY 10 • JANUARY 14

Madurai's Flower Market: Indian culture is deeply entwined with fragrance. From sandalwood paste and sacred *tulsi* to garlands of jasmine and roses, flowers and perfumes play an important role in everyday life and Hindu ritual. This morning we visit Madurai's flower market, which will be especially lively as families select flowers and garlands for Pongal, celebrated tomorrow. Enormous quantities of flowers are sold each day for temples, ceremonies and celebrations.

17th Century Indo-Saracenic Palace: We then visit the magnificent Thirumalai Nayakkar Palace, a 17th-century Indo-Saracenic architectural gem built during the reign of King Thirumalai Nayak. Its monumental courtyards, soaring arches and richly ornamented interiors reveal the grandeur of the Nayak period.

Afternoon at leisure: 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*

DAY 11 • JANUARY 15

Pongal celebration: We will begin the day by celebrating Pongal, Tamil Nadu's great harvest festival and a joyful expression of gratitude for the Sun, the land and the abundance of the harvest. I like to rise early to watch the sun come over the horizon and take a quiet moment to reflect on the year that has passed, give thanks for all that it has brought me, and look ahead to the year to come. It is a beautiful way to mark the beginning of a new year.

The hotel will be beautifully decorated for Pongal with sugarcane, garlands of mango leaves and traditional palm-leaf decorations. Mango leaves are traditionally used in auspicious decorations, symbolising life, prosperity and well-being, while sugarcane is an important symbol of the harvest and abundance.

We will be invited to take part in creating *kolams*, the intricate and colourful designs traditionally drawn at the entrance to homes and buildings. Considered auspicious, *kolams* are a welcoming gesture and are traditionally associated with prosperity and good fortune.

We will also participate in the Pongal ceremony, as the priest performs the traditional rituals with chanting, the ringing of a bell, a sacred fire and offerings of fruit and sugarcane. The ceremony is intimate and deeply atmospheric, offering a glimpse into the spiritual dimension of the festival. Locals will be dressed in their most beautiful saris, adding to the sense of occasion.

At the heart of the celebration is the preparation of the Pongal pot. Rice and milk are cooked together until the pot boils over, at which moment everyone calls out "Pongalo Pongal!" The overflowing pot symbolises abundance and prosperity – the wish that the year ahead will bring plenty and happiness.

Kerala's tea and spice country: After breakfast, 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.

SPICE AND TEA GARDENS; WILDLIFE OF THE WESTERN GHATS IN KERALA

A botanical walk: 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.

Cooking class: 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*

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.

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.

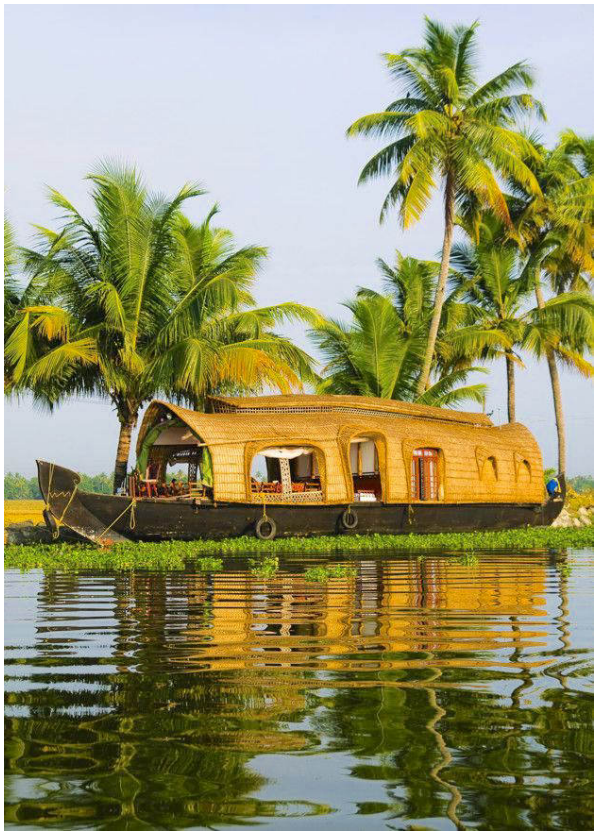
KERALA

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 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.



THE BACKWATERS, KERALA

DAY 12 • JANUARY 16

Boating in Periyar National Park 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.

Tea plantation visit: This afternoon 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*

DAY 13 • JANUARY 17

Thekkady to Kumarakom – A scenic drive 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.

Sunset cruise: We will 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*

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.

DAY 14 • JANUARY 18

A day at leisure: A day at leisure. You might choose to take a yoga class, walk in the butterfly garden, do a pottery session, shop, relax by the pool, indulge in an Ayurvedic treatment at the hotel's spa (at an additional cost), go birdwatching, or explore the butterfly garden – home to over 54 species of dragonflies and damselflies, a testament to the thriving local ecosystem.

Afternoon tea: Keep an eye out for the floating tea shop in the afternoon, where you can meet the local tea lady from the nearby village and try a freshly brewed masala chai and snacks.

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

DAY 15 • JANUARY 19

Kumarakom to 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.

ATMOSPHERIC OLD KOCHI: A MIX OF DUTCH ARCHITECTURE, CHINESE FISHING NETS, ANTIQUES SHOPS, *KATHIKALI* (A SACRED KERALAN DANCE FORM), CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERIES AND COOL CAFES

Kathakali: 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*

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.

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.

DAY 16 • JANUARY 20

17th century murals: We will start at the Mattancherry Palace (tentatively listed for UNESCO World Heritage status) to see its extraordinary 17th century murals, before enjoying the atmospheric streets of Jew Town and enjoying the art galleries and cafes that it is known for.

Kochi-Muziris Biennale: We are excited that the Kochi-Muziris Biennale (Cochin Biennale) will be taking place during our stay, and we will immerse ourselves in the city's vibrant art scene. We will explore the exhibitions and site-specific installations scattered across various venues including colonial buildings, decaying warehouses, and historical landmarks. This international contemporary art exhibition is renowned for its unique fusion of art, culture, and history. It is the largest art event in India and the biggest contemporary art festival in Asia.

Antiques shopping in historic Kochi We will also make sure we have time for some antiques shopping in Jew Town before we gather for a special farewell dinner to celebrate our journey and reflect on the experiences we have shared.

Farewell dinner: 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*

DAY 17 • JANUARY 21

Departure: After breakfast, enjoy a relaxed morning before we check out of the hotel by 11am, marking the end of our journey.

Your private airport transfer to Kochi International Airport is included in the tour cost, giving you complete flexibility about when you depart. You may use this transfer today or, should you wish to extend your stay, on a later day.

Meals: *Breakfast*

TOUR DETAILS

How to Reserve Your Place

To reserve your place on this journey, please request a Booking Form (including Terms & Conditions) by emailing:

nicole@nicolecourt.com.au

To confirm your booking:

- Complete and return the Booking Form.
- Pay the AUD $1,000 deposit.

To enable this journey to proceed, a minimum of eight bookings must be received by 28 August 2027. Once confirmed, bookings will remain open, subject to availability.

Payment Schedule (all prices are in Australian Dollars)

At the time of booking

- AUD $1,000 deposit

28 August 2027

- Additional payment due, bringing your total paid to 25% of the tour cost

28 September 2027

- Final balance due

Later Bookings:

Bookings received after 28 September 2027

- Full payment is required at the time of booking.

Design Tour to South India Tour Dates

5 – 21 January 2028
17 Days | 16 Nights

What's Included

- 16 nights accommodation in carefully selected hotels
- All meals as outlined in the itinerary
- Private airport arrival and departure transfers in India
- Ground transport in air-conditioned vehicles with experienced drivers
- Complimentary bottled or filtered water throughout the journey
- Tour leadership by Nicole Court, together with full support from our accompanying Indian tour manager
- Specialist local guides at key destinations
- Entrance fees, monument charges, taxes and gratuities
- 24-hour support from my expert Indian travel team

What's Not Included

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

What's Not Included (continued)

- Comprehensive travel and health insurance (required)
- Medical expenses
- Costs associated with voluntary or unavoidable itinerary changes
- Personal expenses (including laundry, mini bar, telephone calls and spa treatments)
- Video camera fees at certain museums and sites

Cancellation Terms

Should you need to cancel your booking, please notify me by email.

- Cancellations before 28 August 2027: deposit is retained
- Cancellations after 28 August 2027: 25% cancellation fee
- Cancellations after 28 September 2027: 100% cancellation fee

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Tour Confirmation

This journey requires a minimum of eight guests to proceed.

Please wait until you receive written confirmation before booking your international flights (or ensure your flights are fully refundable).

Should minimum numbers not be reached by 28 August 2027, you will be advised on 30 August 2027. At that time, the tour may either:

- proceed at a revised cost; or
- be cancelled.

Should the tour be re-costed, you may either accept the revised price or cancel your booking within one day of notification.

If the tour is cancelled – or you choose not to proceed with a revised price – you may elect to receive either:

- a full refund of all monies paid (including your deposit), or
- a credit towards a future journey.

Refunds will be processed within five business days.

Booking Terms & Conditions

For full details, please refer to the
"Design Tour to South India January 2028 Booking Form with Terms and Conditions."

Medical Assistance

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

Dietary Requirements

Dietary requirements can usually be accommodated. Please advise me at the time of booking so arrangements can be made in advance.

Flexibility

Every effort has been made to deliver the itinerary exactly as described. However, travel in India occasionally requires minor adjustments. Should an activity need to move to another day, or a site unexpectedly close, an alternative experience of equal interest and quality will be arranged.

TESTIMONIALS

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 three highlights, but that's impossible – every single day was full of them.
Laura Reid, Sydney

A FANTASTIC SECOND TRIP WITH NICOLE. Can highly recommend this fantastic trip to South India – so special! Fabulous trip with Nicole and a really great group of people! Loved everything about it and definitely want to go to India again in 2027 with Nicole!
Sarah Ogilvie, Melbourne

WHAT AN AWESOME TIME WE HAD IN SOUTHERN INDIA. I would highly recommend this tour. Fabulous from all aspects…people, places, arts, architecture and of course the amazing Nicole. 🧡
Lee Lemon, Maroochydore

WHAT A SENSATIONAL TIME WE HAD ON THIS TOUR IN JANUARY 2026. Highly recommend to anyone. I was a solo traveller, first time in India and Southern India is amazing. Don't delay booking this trip.
Prue Robertson, Scone

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A SOFT INTRODUCTION TO INDIA THIS MAY BE THE TRIP FOR YOU! Nicole Court's Design Tour to South India is perfectly curated to cover all aspects of the sub-continent with an itinerary that is flexible enough to include spontaneous experiences if they present themselves. Traversing the bottom of India from East to West provides enormous variety of cultures, landscapes and excursions all carefully chosen by Nicky. On our trip, her Operations Manager, Aditya, kept everything running smoothly along with Nicole, both keeping their cool and never ruffled by the occasional hiccup which would present itself…it is India after all!!

Thanks to Nicky and her team you will love everything and come away enlightened. Highly recommended.
Kathie Bridge, Adelaide

TESTIMONIALS (CONTINUED)

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

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

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 entwine, 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

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

TESTIMONIALS (CONTINUED)

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

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

- 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

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

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

TESTIMONIALS (CONTINUED)

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

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

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 has 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

TESTIMONIALS (CONTINUED)

THANK YOU FOR AN AMAZING TRIP. You curated an incredible experience for us and while I'm still processing India, all of the details that made our trip comfortable were taken care of by you..

I have never stayed in such magnificent accommodations. And I know you put a lot of time and effort into your choices.

It was wonderful to be met at the airport in Delhi and whisked through customs. I loved meeting and learning from the local vendors you took us to, and your restaurant choices were spot on. You and your on-the-ground team were delightful and I enjoyed learning about Rajasthan from all of you. There did not seem to be any detail overlooked.

You are a great tour guide because you solicit input and listen to those who have toured with you. You also have an infectious love of India which transfers to those fortunate enough to be on a tour with you!

Your attention to detail and the thoughtful planning of all we did was not lost on me and, although India stretched me in many ways, I thoroughly enjoyed seeing it through your eyes. The history, the colour, the people, were all things I loved seeing. I know you put in countless hours planning and it showed.

I would highly recommend your trips to anyone interested in exploring India with you. Thank you for giving this hesitant traveller to India an incredible experience!
Julie Ogden, Colorado, USA

IT WAS SUCH A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE! You designed an incredible experience for us. What an honour it was to be able to join you!
Teri LeClair, Washington State, USA

I REMEMBER THE FEELINGS OF AMAZEMENT WE EXPERIENCED EVERY DAY as you put more of beautiful Rajasthan, Delhi and Agra before us.
Leanne Geneve, Perth

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.
Tim Wilson, Sydney

TESTIMONIALS (CONTINUED)

THE DESIGN TOUR TO CALCUTTA WAS FABULOUS, as was the group of friends I came away with**.**
May Clementson, Sydney

OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS, I HAVE THOUGHT OF YOU OFTEN AND OUR WONDERFUL SRI LANKAN EXPERIENCE. It was a great trip. Brilliantly designed and executed (and obviously well researched). I especially loved your cheerful competence. So nice to be around. Very special trip indeed.
Vicki Craig, Sydney

HAVING NICKY AS THE TRAVEL LEADER WAS AN ABSOLUTE DREAM! Her passion and love for India run deep and shone through in every moment of our splendid adventure.

Her dedication to the planning of the trip was evident in every well thought out aspect of the trip. From the snacks/drinks/tissues in our travel cars, to the relationships with the guides & the hosts of the amazing properties we stayed at and visited. I didn't feel a moment of stress or unsafe on the entire trip.

I loved the way Nicky considered each experience. We were able to really have some true moments of wonder and before there was overwhelm we would be back at our beautiful accommodation sipping G&Ts. Or on a boat on the Ganges watching dolphins and the sunset. Or gasping as the Himalayas revealed themselves through the clouds while we sipped our morning cups of tea. Or the flower markets in Calcutta, like no other flower markets in the world. A day didn't go by where I didn't say WOW.

Nicky also held the space within the group so beautifully that we've all come away from the trip staying in touch and already had multiple gatherings since.

It was a heart opening, eye opening, unforgettable holiday. I would do it again in a heartbeat. But only with Nicky as my guide.
Sally, Sydney