



South India: Yoga, the Backwaters & beaches of Kerala – 20 days

Jeep tour with yoga retreat, visits to wildlife reserves, backwater cruises, and a lot of cultural activities.

Group tour, February 1-20, 2018; November 1-20, 2017

Tour JTT-KE-01: Delhi - Calicut – Wayanad Sanctuary - Nilambur - Cheruthuruthy - Cochin - Alleppey – Backwaters – Marari Beach – Delhi

Activities & sights: Yoga retreat, walks in a wildlife reserve, cruising on the Backwaters, village life, cultural and community-based activities (traditional music & dance, instrument-making, weaving & pottery) and sightseeing the European architectural heritage of Cochin.



The tour in brief

Kerala, India's southwestern-most state is green, blessed with life-giving rivers, jungle-clad mountains, and enough rice fields and coconuts to feed another two states. It also has a rich culture of literature, song and dance. We're going to see it all on this tour, that starts with a **yoga retreat of 7 days** in a beautiful spot in Kerala's hills called the **Western Ghats**, at the edge of a wildlife reserve. In between yoga sessions, guided by our accomplished teacher, we'll go into the nearby wildlife park, looking for elephants, hornbills and maybe a tiger.

After eight days of revitalising yoga, we will explore Kerala's hinterland. We'll sleep in heritage country houses, take classes with the students of a **song and dance academy**, explore the historical town of **Cochin**, and do a **cruise** on a traditional wood and cane houseboat on the **Backwaters**. To top it off, you'll get to unwind whatever has not been unwound so far on quiet and little known Cherai Beach.

Itinerary

Day 01: Delhi → Calicut – Wayanad (120 km/ 3 hrs)

After arrival at Calicut Airport, you are transferred to Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. This beautifully forested protected area lies in the Western Ghats, a cool hilly haven famous for its enormous variety of flora and fauna. Your stay will be at 'Banasura Hill Resort', an accommodation tucked away amidst lush green forests, for the next seven days.

(Lunch, dinner included)



Day 02 - 08: At Wayanad, Yoga Retreat

In the morning, an introductory yoga session will take place, where you'll meet your teacher (if not the night before) and go over the yoga sessions. The retreat is open to yogis and yoginis of all levels. Your teacher will try to

adjust to your level and special wishes, if any.

(Breakfast, lunch & dinner included throughout the stay at MGE)

What you'll do

Banasura Hill Resort is set amidst verdant hills, surrounded by tea and coffee plantations which make the ideal environment for long and short aimless walks. Its main nearby attraction is a spectacular variety of the same: Wayanad (or Muthanga) Wildlife Reserve, where jeep drives, elephant rides and guided walks can be done.

Yoga can be done almost anywhere, but on a retreat like this, away from it all, you are able to spend more time on it, you'll have less distractions and mental stress like you would in everyday life, and the generally relaxing atmosphere will help you to get into a space of self-reflection, returning to your own true nature. This, in yogic terms called *pratyahara*, is perhaps the essence of yoga.

During the retreat your days will be centered around the yoga practices but they will definitely be full. A typical day would look like this:

- Pre-yoga light snack with and tea (coffee if you like)
- Morning outdoor yoga (weather permitting, else indoors)
- Breakfast – a choice of Indian or continental.
- Free time. You can wander the lush green area on short or longer walks (guided if required) or visit the nearby Tholpetty Forest inside Wayanad W.S. At the resort there is a small library with books that you can take to your balcony and there's a nice and clean swimming pool, open round the clock.
- Lunch will be Indian style, mainly Keralan, but can be adjusted to your wishes regarding spiciness for instance.
- Early afternoon is for relaxing, going on a walk or taking a dip in the pool again as you like.
- Late afternoon the second yoga session will happen, again outdoors.

- Delicious dinner
- Relax, hang out, read, listen to the crickets, star gaze or go to bed early.



Visit to Wayanad Wildlife Reserve

On the first day we'll visit Wayanad (or Muthunga) Wildlife Sanctuary, part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The reserve is an impressive 334 km² large, and home to tiger, wild Asian elephant, leopard, jungle cat, civet, Nilgiri langur, wild dog, wild gaur (also known as Indian bison), spotted deer, sambhar (a large deer), Malabar (giant) squirrel and sloth bear. Among the birds that can be seen are wild peacock,

babblers, cuckoos, owls, woodpeckers and jungle fowl (the wild ancestor of the domesticated chicken). We return to the resort by late morning. Today, we'll do a two-hours jeep safari inside the sanctuary in an open jeep.

Day 08: Yoga Retreat at Wayanad, excursions

On the last day, in the morning, we'll visit Uravu Centre where you can see the bamboo workshop, meet the artisans and designers, and see how they create marvels out of different varieties of bamboo grown locally. The visit also includes interaction with the promoters, visit to the bamboo nursery and the shop. You will enjoy the traditional, organic local lunch.

Return back to the resort for lunch and the afternoon yoga session.

Dinner and overnight at Wayanad.

(Breakfast, lunch & dinner included)

Day 09: Wayanad – Nilaumbur/Pandikkad (110 km, 3.5 hrs)

Nilaumbur on the fort hills of Western Ghats, surrounded by teak plantations, has its own charm. Your stay will be at MaranatMana which is a several hundred years old heritage property reflecting the age-old traditions of a Kerala Brahmin family. Focusing on sustainable living, this place strikes an excellent balance between traditional life style and modern living. The two acres of sacred grove on the farm is a representation of bio-diversity that is still sustained.



Overnight in Pandikkad.

(Breakfast, lunch & dinner included)

Day 10: Niluambur - River Nila/Cheruthuruthy (60 km/ 1.5 hrs)

Today, we continue further south to River Nila and Cheruthuruthy. En route, we'll spend time with a family of musicians in Angadipuram. The *musical trail* laid out here is a journey to showcase the percussion culture of River Nila. A lecture plus demonstration on various kinds of musical instruments will be given, concluded by an enchanting performance by the group. Lunch will be had with the community.

After this, we'll proceed to an Ayurvedic Heritage resort at Cheruthuruthy, where we'll check in for overnight and dinner.

(Breakfast, lunch included)

Day 11: At Cheruthuruthy

In the morning, we'll visit the Kerala Kalamandalam School. We'll spend the morning with the master and students, interacting with them and seeing how they are taught classical dance and the music tradition of Kerala. A young team of performers will show you the dance forms, music and percussions.



We return back to the hotel for lunch, after which there is time to relax.

Early evening, we leave for a local village and in the twilight, spend time with the folk artists, in the courtyard of the local household, who will showcase the folk heritage of River Nila. A young team of talented performers will put up a fantastic show of dance forms, music and percussions that make the region so rich in its cultural tradition.

Dinner & Overnight at Nila/ Cheruthuruthy.

(Breakfast included)

Day 12: Cheruthuruthy - Kochi (Cochin) (125 km/ 3.5 hrs)

After breakfast, our interpreter for the day will visit us. He'll guide us to a local village, where you'll see weaving, potter's workshop and a bell metal workshop. The potters really weave magic on clay. You'll get the chance to make your own pottery and you can give orders for small souvenirs to take home as a memento. At the bell metal workshop, you'll witness a unique craft that is confined to a few families only in the region. One can watch the intricate scientific process of creating the bell metal and see how it is molded artistically into traditional teapots, unique door locks, etc.

Lunch will be at a local resort.

After lunch, we set out on a 3.5 hrs drive to Fort Kochi. Historically known as Cochin, it is considered the jewel in the crown of Kerala with its European heritage and true cosmopolitan temperament. A leisurely walk through its streets is one of the best ways to discover all that the city has to offer - its natural harbour and historical sites. Overnight in Fort Cochin.

(Breakfast included)

Day 13: At Kochi (Cochin)

In the morning, we'll explore Cochin and see some of the most interesting historical monuments, such as the Dutch Palace, the Jewish Synagogue and the Jew Town.

Lunch will be enjoyed at a special fish restaurant. Afternoon time will be free for you to relax or rest.

In the evening, we'll attend a Kathakali dance performance in a theater. Kathakali is the most famous dance form, typical of Kerala. It is considered one of the highest developed dance forms in India. Overnight in Kochi.

(Breakfast included)



Day 14: Alleppey / Backwaters

After breakfast, you are transferred to Alleppey by road. Here, amidst the backwaters of Kerala, we board a houseboat for a day cruise. The houseboats will be cruising through the backwaters of Kuttanad - the rice bowl of Kerala and Alleppey (Alappuzha) in Kerala. The cruise will go along vast paddy fields, fishing nets, coconut grooves, and local villages. It is really a beautiful, green water world and gliding through the water on the traditionally built boat is an utterly relaxing experience. In the evening, the boat will be anchored in a scenic location from where you can catch the beautiful sunrise and sunset the next day. Lunch and dinner to be served on board. Overnight on the houseboat.

(Breakfast, lunch & dinner included)

Day 15: On the Backwaters

Immediately after sunrise we set out for a short morning cruise, while breakfast is being served onboard. We disembark the houseboat at 09:30 for a short transfer to a secluded island on the



backwaters. There are six cottages overlooking the backwaters with the most stunning views. Known for its bird life, this island is a good stopover for relaxation. Cycling, village visits, and small trips in canoes are included. Overnight at Karimbavalavu.

(Breakfast, lunch & dinner included)

Day 16: Backwaters - Cherai Beach (1 hr)

After breakfast, we leave the island and drive to Cherai Beach, where check into the very pleasant Cherai Beach Resort. The next three and a half days you can relax here and enjoy this little known but beautiful beach. Stay will be on breakfast-only basis, which means you are free to go out for lunch and dinner in one of the many delightful local restaurants..

(Breakfast included)



Day 17 to 19: At Cherai Beach

(Breakfast included)

Day 20: Cherai Beach - Kochi airport ✈️ Delhi

Transfer to Kochi airport for your return flight to Delhi.

(Breakfast included)

Tour price

Group tour, with English & Italian speaking yoga teacher cum tour guide.

INR 193.350 (at the present currency rate €2845).

This price is non-commissionable.

Price includes: Air fare Delhi - Calicut and Kochi – Delhi, all accommodation (twin sharing, 2 person rooms), starting with full board during the yoga retreat and AP or MAP during the following traveling days (at Cheruthuruthi, Cochin and Cherai Beach breakfast only), all transport vehicles. English & Italian speaking tour leader/yoga teacher throughout, as well as local guides. Yoga retreat of one week (&nights at Wayanad Sanctuary/Banasura Hill Resort, daily yoga exercises during the remainder of the tour, village visits and entrée fees.

Not included: international flight, tips; alcoholic drinks; laundry service; telephone calls; travel/ personal insurance; other expenses of personal nature.

Individual tour: Please ask for a quotation.

Accommodation used

At Wayanad: Banasura Hill Resort - cottages <http://www.wayanad.com/BanasuraHillResort/>

Nilambur: Maranat Mana (vegetarian food available only) <http://maranatmana.com/>

Cheruthuruthy: River Retreat - retreat chamber rooms <http://www.riverretreat.in/>

Fort Kochi: Fort House or similar <http://www.hotelforhouse.com/>

Backwaters: AC houseboat <http://www.lakeslagoons.com/houseboats.php>

Alleppey: Our Land resort www.ourlandresort.com

Cherai Beach: Cherai Beach Resort - sunrise villa <http://www.cheraibeachresorts.com/about.html>

Extension and prelude options

It is very well possible to stay longer at Marani Beach. Or to head out to the Lakshadweep Islands, reachable in a short flight from Cochin. The Lakshadweep are barely known and undiscovered but as beautiful as the Maldives. There are four islands where you can stay, lie on the beach, go out snorkeling or on diving trips to explore the amazing underwater world.

No Yoga?

Do you like the itinerary but are you not into yoga? In that case we have several other options for you.

1. Same tour with **wildlife option** (group tour & individual)

The same tour as described here, but without the yoga retreat. Instead of this we'll take you, more extensively, into Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary and some other nearby parks. The highlight will be Nagarhole NP, without doubt the best park of the Western Ghats and South-India and surprisingly little known or visited. Here there are very good chances of coming up close with wild elephant and *gaur* ('Indian bison', the largest wild bovine in the world) while tiger sightings are considerably higher than in other parks in the area.



After 8 nights in these parks you continue the tour as described above from day 09. Price indication: INR 175.000 (group tour, minimum 6 pax). Ask for quotation if you want this as an individual arrangement.

2. Same tour with **Lakshadweep Islands** (individual arrangements)

You can spend a week (before or after the group tour) on the pristine Lakshadweep, snorkeling or diving and feeling like Robinson Crusoe on a (nearly) deserted paradisaical island. These islands are very similar to the Maledives but hardly discovered.



3. Or you can ask us for more suggestions: info@jantreksandtravels.com.