

# Wonders of South India



## TRIP OVERVIEW

The Hindu heartland of this fascinating subcontinent presents a dazzling array of experiences unique to the region; from colonial railways crossing bottomless gauges to priceless temple craftwork depicting spiritual legends, our in depth sixteen day itinerary immerses you within this mystifying province. Cruise the palm-fringed backwaters of Alleppey, marvel at royal splendour in Mysore Palace and catch a glimpse of Kabini's allusive Bengal tiger.

## ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information that you require for a smooth and comfortable trip to South India. Please take the time to read this dossier to familiarise yourself with all the aspects of our tour. It includes important information such as visa requirements and travel insurance.

### Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

**Day 1: UK to Bangalore** Depart London on your scheduled, overnight flight to Bangalore.

**Day 2: Bangalore D** On arrival into Bangalore, you will be met by a local guide and transferred to your hotel. After settling in, sample delicious local delights at your welcome meal.

**Day 3: Bangalore to Mysore B/L/D.** Following breakfast, discover the cosmopolitan hub of India's booming IT industry peppered with Victoria-era architecture on your tour of the city. Visit the atmospheric Bull Temple, home to an enormous granite monolith of Nandi the celestial bull, wander through Lalbagh Botanical Gardens to admire the world's most diverse plant species and marvel at Vidhan Soudha's colossal Neo-Dravidian architectural splendour. In the afternoon depart Bangalore and proceed to your hotel in the ancient city of Mysore.

**Day 4: Mysore B/L/D** Considered one of India's most flamboyant cities, Mysore boasts a glittering royal heritage, bustling marketplaces and a thriving centre for yoga expertise. Your tour today takes you to the heart of the city and one of India's grandest royal abodes — the sprawling Mysore Palace. Discover the palace's painted glass ceiling with peacock motifs in the Marriage Pavilion, treasured royal paintings that line the Public Durbar Hall and a glistening Golden Howdah used to carry the Maharaja. Atop the nearby Chamundi hills, visit the Chamundi Temple famed for intricate carvings on its towering gopuram entrance and panoramic vistas over Mysore. This afternoon you'll visit the 18<sup>th</sup> century fort town of Srirangapatnam, once the stronghold of ruler Tipu Sultan before his defeat by colonial forces. Cross the main bridge over the Cauvery River to discover intriguing monuments documenting South India's power struggles, including a striking marble church built by French missionaries. Return to your hotel in Mysore this evening.

**Day 5: Mysore to Kabini B/L/D** This morning travel to Kabini — wild wetlands that surround the Kabini River. The riverbanks boast a rich variety of wildlife, particularly in summer as the receding water presents luscious meadows on either side. Upon arrival, enjoy the remainder of today at leisure.

**Day 6: Kabini B/L/D** Spend this morning exploring the surrounding jungle on a Canter safari. From peculiar beaked Malabar Pied Hornbills perched upon mammoth Rosewood trees, to Indian bison meandering across the road and the prized Bengal tiger pacing amongst evergreen bamboo, your safari route gives you the best chance to observe South India's most intriguing natural inhabitants. In the afternoon, spot the largest congregation of Asiatic elephants, a plethora of majestic water birds and marsh crocodiles stalking shallow waters during your river safari.

(For guests with morning land safaris, an evening boat safari is scheduled. Similarly, guests with morning boat safaris will have the opportunity to experience the land safari in the afternoon. The safari meeting point is approximately an hour from your hotel, so you will return after 10:00am at the hotel for breakfast, lunch at approximately 14:00 and then depart for your next safari.)

**Day 7: Kabini to Ooty B/L/D** After breakfast journey to the hill station of Ooty, one of three that occupy the UNESCO recognised biome of Nilgiri Hill. For the next two nights, your elevated position offers stunning views across the southern plains and tea gardens that hug the sloping terrain.

**Day 8: Ooty B/L/D** Completed in 1899 by British colonial forces, the Nilgiri Mountain Railway transports passengers through a series of gauges, across lofty bridges and around hillsides blanketed by tea plantations.

**Day 9: Ooty to Madurai B/L/D** Depart Ooty for one of India's oldest cities, Madurai. As an important place of worship and commerce, it encapsulates the complex historical tapestry of South India. Later this evening, witness a night ceremony at Madurai's biggest temple; during this procession, behold the spectacle of Lord Shiva's bronze statue being carried to the Hindu God of Love's bedchamber, accompanied by religious prayer and atmospheric temple music.

**Day 10: Madurai B/L/D** This morning, visit one of India's grandest temples, Meenakshi Amman Temple. This complex presents 33,000 sculptures, illustrating vivid Hindu tales amongst 12 gargantuan gopuram towers engraved with gods, goddesses and demons — all in staggering detail. The pinnacle of your visit and testimony to the region's architectural finesse lies within the 'Hall of a Thousand Pillars', a masterpiece of lifelike sculptures clinging to towering pillars within a vast gallery.

**Day 11: Madurai to Munnar B/L/D** Following breakfast, cross into the Indian state of Kerala arriving in Munnar — a region famed for its rolling hillsides coated in emerald tea plantations. The rest of your day is at leisure.

**Day 12: Munnar B/L/D** Today visit natural splendours of the region including the mirror-like waters of Mattupetty Lake, call out at Echo Point whilst listening patiently to the returning call from surrounding hills and discover the origins of your morning tea at a plantation. Return to Munnar for a well-deserved rest.

**Day 13: Munnar to Alleppey B/L/D** In the morning, travel from Munnar to Alleppey - a hub of Kerala's vast waterway network. Here you will board a traditional houseboat which will be your transport and accommodation for the night. Enjoy a leisurely cruise through winding backwaters and meander through picturesque lagoons to admire stunning rural scenery whilst observing quaint surrounding villages.

**Day 14: Alleppey to Cochin B/L/D.** Beckoning merchants and explorers for over 500 years, the port city of Cochin offers a dynamic cultural mixture of Portuguese houses, ancient mosques and crumbling remains of British colonialism, all overlooking the tropical Malabar Coast. Disembark this morning for a half-day sightseeing tour to visit the seemingly modest Mattancherry Palace, home to astonishing Hindu murals depicting Puranic legends. Continue to the edifice of St Francis Church, believed to be one of India's oldest churches and gaze at Cochin's promenade, lined with distinct spiderlike Chinese fishing nets. This evening, enjoy a farewell meal at your hotel.

**Day 15: Cochin B/L/D** Enjoy a full day at leisure in Cochin and in the early evening head to a Kathakali cultural show and watch a traditionally based dance based on themes of Hindu mythology.

**Day 16: Cochin to UK or extension B** Depart your hotel after breakfast and transfer to the airport for your scheduled flight back to the UK, via Delhi, or continue onto your chosen extension.

## ACCOMMODATION DETAILS & MAP



### Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience, location, comfort or character, and can range from business hotels to houseboats. Hotel accommodation is generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note there is no international classification system for hotels, and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and India. All group tours hotels have private bathroom facilities and air-conditioning, where needed. Rest assured that all accommodation used by Mercury Holidays is regularly inspected by our staff and partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

If you have booked a triple share please note that your room will be a twin room with a rollaway bed or sofa bed added. This may limit the floor space in the room.

**Please note: final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.**

## ON YOUR ARRIVAL

On your arrival in Bangalore you will be met by a representative from our local agent, **Jayasree Travels & Tours** holding a sign displaying: "Mercury Holidays". The Mercury Holidays/Jayasree Travels and Tours representative will show you to your transfer vehicle. Your guide will be able to answer any queries. However, if you need to contact Jayasree Travels and Tours during your stay the details are:

### Jayasree Travels and Tours

TC No:TC84/2248(4), 2nd Floor, Building Name: An-Nur, Enchakkal, Vallakadav, 695008. Contact number: 0091 471 2505067  
Contact number: 0091 471 2505067

## WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR TOUR

### Visas

A visa is required for entry into India. British Citizen Passport Holders will need to obtain a tourist visa. We work closely with The Travel Visa Company who will be able to arrange your visa on your behalf. Please call them on 01270 250 590 and quote "Mercury Holidays". The Travel Visa Company can only apply for this 120 days before your proposed travel date. When calling the Travel Visa Company they will advise you of any changes to the fees or the procedure, they will also advise you of all information they will require in order to apply for the visa. Alternatively you can visit The Indian Visa Application Centre in London: 142-148 Goswell Road, London, EC1B 7DU. Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months before you enter India. Visa requirements are subject to change and obtaining a visa is the responsibility of the traveller and not Mercury Holidays. We recommend you check with your destinations' Tourist Board or Embassy prior to departure for the most up to date guidelines regarding visas and passport validity.

### Insurance

We strongly recommend that you and all members of your party are suitably insured as soon as you book your holiday. It is a condition of booking that you must have suitable travel insurance. It is important that you purchase travel insurance that suitably covers your participation



### Meals

Breakfast is always western style and served in the hotel each morning. Lunch and dinner will either be always taken at local restaurants or at your hotel. A variety of restaurants are visited giving you the chance to experience a range of dishes and flavours.

### Alcoholic drinks

Please note that Kerala has strict laws regarding the governance of the sale of alcohol in public places including hotels and restaurants. The sale and consumption of alcohol is therefore often restricted in hotels, varying from one establishment to another. You may however bring your own alcohol with you for private consumption in your room.

### Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for **Jayasree Travel and Tours**

Contact	Telephone number
Ms Jayasree Vikraman	0091 974 700 5888
Ms Samitha Azhar	0091 974 471 3380
Mr Biju Unnikrishnan. A.G	0091 952 618 8860
Mr Harish Kumar	0091 952 618 8859
Mr Amit Bhardwaj	0091 995 898 8719

in whatever activities you may undertake at the time that you make your booking. To assist you with this, we have arranged travel insurance in partnership with Holiday Extras. To arrange your travel insurance with Holiday Extras, please call **0800 781 4237** and quote 'WK830' for preferential rates. Please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. Mercury Holidays will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

### Tour Guides - National Guide

This is a fully escorted tour, meaning that you will be met on arrival by your national guide who will remain with you for the duration of your trip. You will also be joined by a local guide in each of the cities which you visit, ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

### Private Tour

If you have booked a private tour then you will be accompanied by a Driver Guide or a Driver and Local Guides. These will be available to you during all scheduled sightseeing. Private Tours can depart on any day of the week depending on flight and train schedules and the opening days of



the attractions. They will follow the itinerary as described in the brochure unless you have been advised otherwise and you will still have all of the same meals, sightseeing and local excursions included.

### Tipping

It is customary to tip your guide and driver. This is at your discretion, but we recommend you allow approximately £3 per person per day. It is asked that you tip in pounds and not local currency, please do not give coins as these are difficult to exchange.

### Health and Vaccinations

It is your responsibility to check any health and vaccination requirements applicable to your booked arrangements. We can only provide general information about this. Health and hygiene facilities and disease risks vary from country to country. You should take health advice about your own needs as early as possible and in good time before your departure. Sources of information include; [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk), [www.travelhealthpro.org.uk](http://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk), [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk), your General Practitioner or a specialist clinic.

### Physical Accessibility

This tour is accessible to most people with a good level of fitness and normal mobility. It involves climbing of steep stairs and getting on and off coaches. This tour is not suitable for anyone with walking difficulties. All our tours feature a "Tour Pace" to help find the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights, climb stairs and get on and off coaches and boats. The tour pace for Wonders of South India is intermediate. A good level of fitness is required as you may be on your feet for approximately four hours in a day, though this will be interspersed with regular breaks and will vary from day to day. You will be walking around the sights, and may be getting on and off coaches, trains and boats and climbing steps which may be irregular. You will stay in variety of hotels throughout the tour. Our guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

### Group Size

The minimum number of travellers in your group will be 10, and the maximum will be 35. If in the unlikely event there are less than 10 people booked on your tour date, we will endeavour to reduce any disruption to your holiday and try to operate your tour with lower passenger numbers. If we are not able to operate your departure date, then you may be asked to change to a different date and a full refund will be made available to

you should this alternative not be suitable.

### Itinerary Changes

The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. The schedules of the domestic airlines in country are subject to frequent changes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your local guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Some road construction &/or weather conditions may lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

### Currency Exchange

The currency in India is the Rupee or Rs. The Rupee is a closed currency and officially you are not allowed to take any cash out of India. US Dollars and GBP are also widely accepted in India should you wish to keep an alternative currency on you. There are restrictions on taking Indian rupees into India. Visitors, including tourists, are not permitted to take any amount of Indian currency into the country. You can take cash or travellers' cheques (in pounds sterling or another foreign currency) and/or a bank card with you and exchange or withdraw rupees once in India. We recommend that you exchange your currency before you leave the UK. It is important that you budget carefully and ensure you have the right form of currency before you arrive in the country. Cash machines will also be available throughout the tour in order to withdraw money in your local currency.

### Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover any personal purchases such as souvenirs, laundry, any meals not included in the itinerary as well as drinks and any additional snacks. Approximately £400 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour. It is a good idea to try and maintain a supply of small notes and change in the local currency for tipping or small purchases.

### Credit Card Information

As normal practice you will be asked for your credit card details on check-in at the hotel in order to cover any extras incurred during your stay. If you do not have a credit card you may be asked for a cash deposit. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in hotels.

## WHAT TO PACK

- Sunglasses, sunscreen and hat in summer
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Warm clothing and thermals in winter
- Camera and charger/spare batteries
- An electric plug converter
- Loo paper for public WCs

- Binoculars
- Mosquito Repellent
- Personal toiletries and first aid kit
- Anti-bacterial hand gel
- Long sleeve shirt and long trousers
- Swimwear

## FLIGHT INFORMATION

**IMPORTANT: Please note that final flight details, including terminal, airline and baggage allowance, will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure. A printed E-ticket is no longer required at check-in, all you need to do is present your passport to the staff at the desk and your boarding pass will be given to you.**

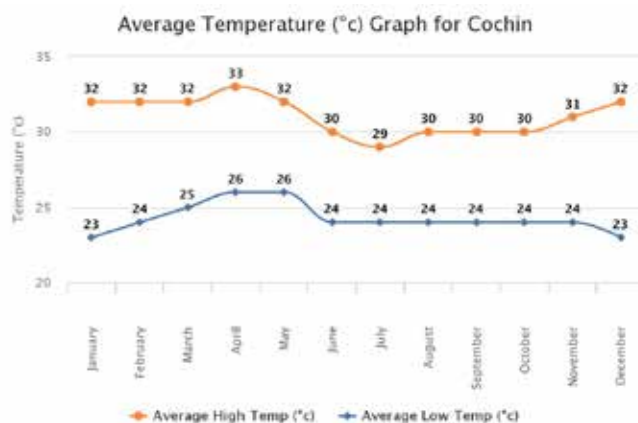
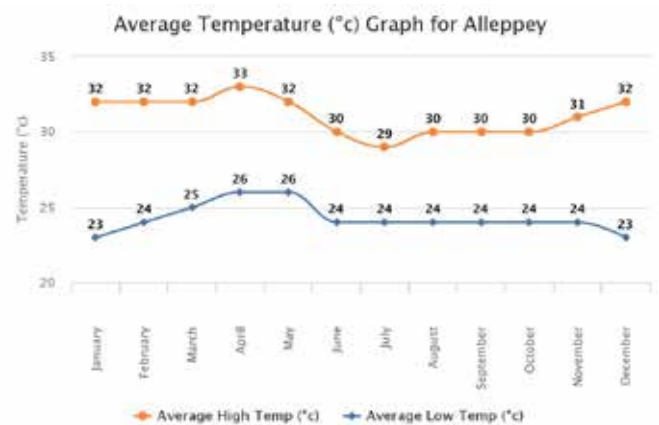
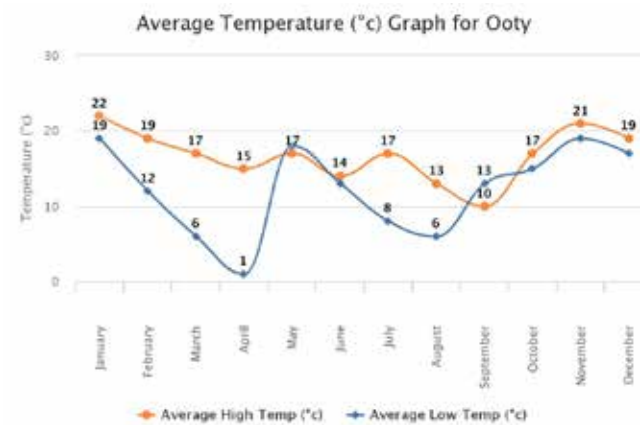
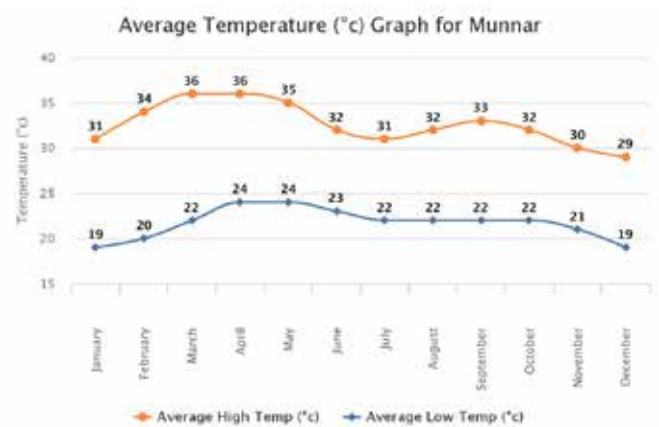
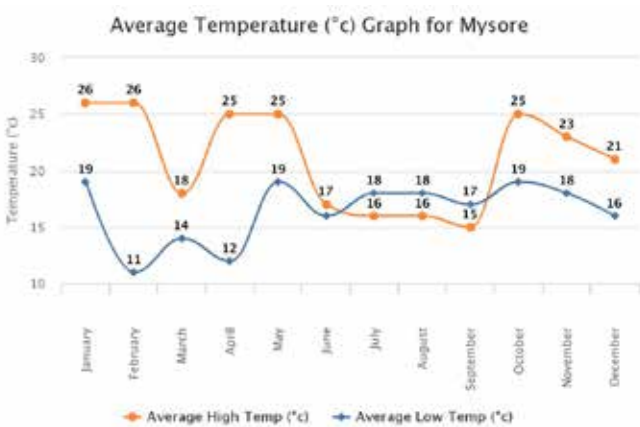
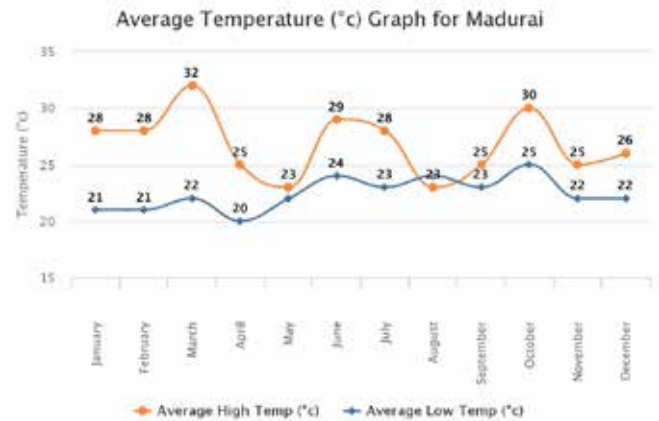
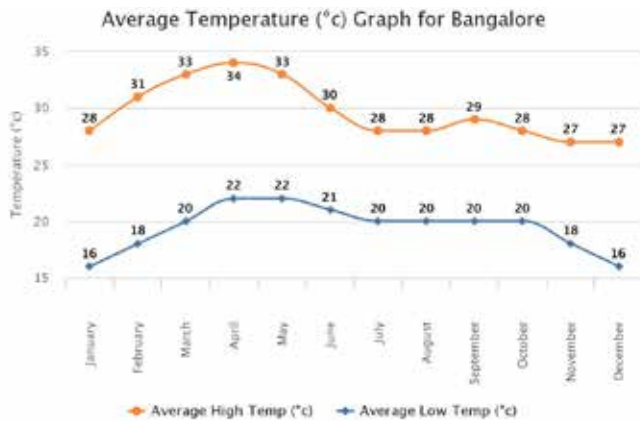
### Airport Extras

If you wish to arrange Airport car parking or accommodation at preferential rates, we recommend you book this in advance with Holiday Extras on 0871 360 2000, quoting HX313.



## WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.





## Marari Beach Stay Extension

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0333 003 0522



### TRIP OVERVIEW

Nestled beside the quaint fishing village of Mararikulam, discover the untouched sandy-beaches of Marari on your three-night extension within a truly tropical retreat. Whether lounging upon the beach soaking up the year-round sunshine, swimming within the Arabian Sea's glistening waters or enjoying a traditional Ayurveda massage at your hotel, the Marari extension is the ideal way to conclude your tour.

### ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your extension to Marari.

#### Your hotel

Your stay will take place at one of the following hotels on Full Board.

**3★ Abad Turtle Beach Marari.** Overlooking the quiet shores of Marari beach, the Abad Turtle Beach provides guests with a sublime tropical retreat with modern and traditional amenities. Stretching across a verdant area, each villa boasts air-conditioning, an en suite, TV, tea/coffee making facilities and a safe.

#### Hotel information

Varankavala, Pollathai P.O, Mararikulam, Alleppey 688567, Kerala  
Contact number: 0091 478 286 0965

**5★ Marari Beach.** This eco-friendly hotel is located in the local fishermen's village of Mararikulam. The lush garden setting and traditional thatched roof buildings make the perfect backdrop for a relaxing holiday. Laze in a hammock or participate in the hotel's excellent activities programme, the choice is yours.

#### Hotel information

Marari Beach P.O, S.L.Puram, Mararikulam, Kerala 688549, India  
Contact number: 0091 484 426 1711

Any alternative hotels or board basis will have been confirmed at booking. Please speak to our reservations department if you are unsure.

#### Alcoholic drinks

Please note that Kerala has strict laws regarding the governance of the sale of alcohol in public places including hotels and restaurants. The sale and consumption of alcohol is therefore often restricted in hotels, varying from one establishment to another. You may however bring your own alcohol with you for private consumption in your room.

#### Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover personal purchases, laundry service, souvenirs, plus any items not included in your Full Board package.

#### Tour Guides

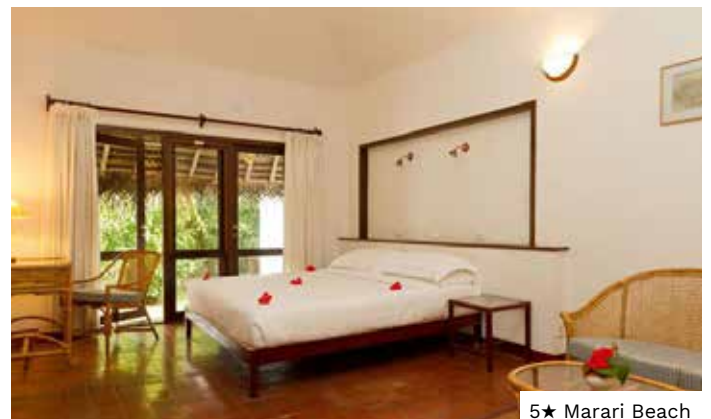
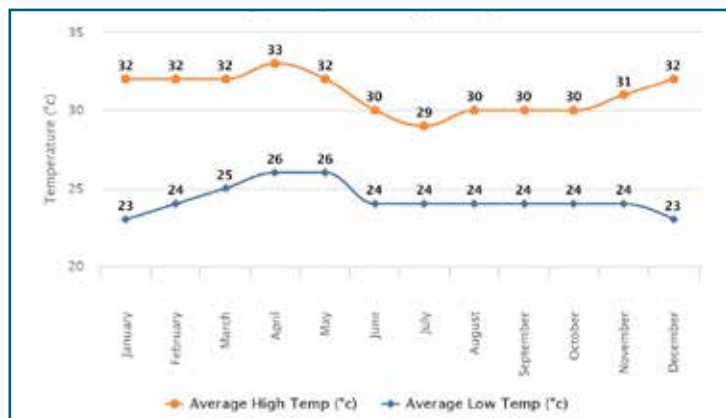
Your stay in Marari is not escorted by a tour guide. All internal transfers are included.

#### Please note

This extension takes place after your main tour.

### WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.



5★ Marari Beach

### FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

For any further enquiries or for more information call us on **0333 003 0522**

## Mumbai City Stay Extension

*If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0333 003 0522*



### TRIP OVERVIEW

Home to India's financial hubs, tropical forests, religious epicentres, a booming fashion industry and culinary hotspots shaped by the country's wild flavours, discover Mumbai's intriguing sights on your three night extension in the city.

### ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your Mumbai extension.

#### Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

#### Day 16: Mumbai B/L/D

Today you will fly to Mumbai and spend your day at leisure to relax or explore your surroundings.

#### Day 17: Mumbai B/L/D

This morning embark on a full day tour of Mumbai including visits to The Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, one of the finest functional railway station buildings in the world; Crawford Market, one of Mumbai's most famous markets and the Oval Maidan.

#### Day 18: Mumbai B/L/D

Enjoy a day at leisure to relax or perhaps venture into this bustling metropolis.

#### Day 19: Mumbai to UK B

This morning transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK.

#### Hotel Information

**4★ The Fern Residency (3 nights):** Showcasing contemporary Indian designs throughout, the Fern Residency offers guests the perfect cosmopolitan retreat with the additional benefit of a nearby monorail in walking distance. Each room is fully air-conditioned with tea/coffee making facilities, safe, Wi-Fi and room service. Outside of your room, discover a large outdoor swimming pool and restaurant serving a delicious selection of international cuisines.

Address: The Fern Residency Mumbai- No. B-411, Hemu Kalani Marg, Sindhi Society, Chembur East, Mumbai, Maharashtra 400071, India  
Telephone number: 0091 22 2523 8000

#### Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money with you to cover any personal purchases, such as souvenirs, laundry, drinks and snacks.

#### Tour Guides

This is a fully escorted tour extension, meaning that you will be met on arrival by your national guide who will remain with you for the duration of your trip.



The Fern Residency

### FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

For any further enquiries or for more information call us on **0333 003 0522**