



A South Indian Odyssey

January 21- February 5, 2021 (16 days)

Join trip leader Cathy Ann Taylor to discover some of South India's sparkling jewels: the lush tea plantations of the Munnar Hills, trekking through the Western Ghat Mountains, the astounding temples of Madurai, exotic spice plantations, Periyar Tiger Reserve, and the palm-fringed beaches and emerald backwaters of Kerala. We'll enjoy all these and more as we trek for four days through tropical montane forests, take a day cruise through the backwaters of Kerala (with great birdwatching opportunities), feast our eyes on Madurai's lavishly decorated Meenakshi temple, learn to "taste" tea, and relax along the shores of the Arabian Sea. Along the way we'll take in performances of traditional dance and drama, relax your senses with Kerala's ancient 'Ayurveda' a holistic system of healing which evolved over 5000 years ago, and indulge in superb South Indian cuisine.

TRIP DETAILS

Easy to moderate ▶ 6 days moderate hiking; cultural explorations and walking tours; 12 nights hotels, 3 nights guest houses or camps

ITINERARY

(You will likely need to leave the U.S. on January 19 or 20 depending on the routing in order to arrive in Cochin on January 21.

Day 1, January 21 ▶ Arrive in Cochin, India

Arrive early at Cochin (Kochi) and transfer to the Trident Hotel (26 miles from the airport), set in the historic Fort Kochi area in Willingdon Island. The Fort Kochi area pays homage to its colonial past, each building whispering a tale of Chinese visitors, Portuguese traders, Jewish settlers, Syrian Christians, and Muslim merchants. In the afternoon, visit the Jewish synagogue and Mattancherry Palace. In the evening, visit Fort Kochi and return to the hotel for dinner. Before dinner meet with your trip leader for a briefing and trip orientation. Lunch and dinner are on your own. CGH Earth Casino Hotel

Day 2, January 22 ▶ Cochin

We'll spend the first half of the day exploring the city: wander the winding streets crammed with 500-year-old Portuguese houses, cantilevered Chinese fishing nets and synagogues, palaces and forts spread over a charming cluster of islands and narrow peninsulas. We'll visit the Mattancherry Palace (closed on Fridays so we will visit day 1 if you arrive early), built by the Portuguese for the Raja of



Cochin in 1557. We'll have lunch in Fort Kochi at Ginger House and from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. we'll take in a Kathakali dance performance, a dramatized play that's usually based on the Hindu epics—the Ramayana, Mahabharatha, and the Puranas. All the great themes are covered: righteousness and evil, frailty and courage, poverty and prosperity, war and peace. Drummers and singers accompany the actors, who tell the story

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through their precise movements, particularly *mudras* (hand gestures) and facial expressions. At sunset, head to the seashore to watch the famous Chinese fishing nets being pulled ashore as the fishermen bring in their catch. Return to the hotel for our welcome dinner.

B,L,D...CGH Earth Casino Hotel

Day 3, January 23 ▶ Cochin | Munnar (5,000')

A four-hour drive brings us to Munnar (81 miles), a quaint hill town and former resort for the British Raj. Once known as the High Range of Travancore, Munnar is the commercial center of some of the world's highest tea-growing estates. Set amid dramatic mountain scenery, the craggy peaks, manicured tea estates, and crisp mountain air make this former hill station an ideal retreat. Just past Munnar is the Windermere Estate, a boutique-meets-country retreat that manages to be both luxurious and intimate at the same time. All the rooms and cottages have spectacular views. In the evening, we enjoy a tour of the estate's spice plantation.

B,L,D...The Windermere Estate

Day 4, January 24 ▶ Munnar (5,000')

We start our day with a visit to Eravikulam National Park, a habitat for the endangered mountain goat, nilgiri tahr. After a visit to the tea museum and factory, we can take a stroll in the main bazaar and try some homemade chocolates from the variety of stores that sell them. Return to the estate for dinner and overnight.

B,L,D...The Windermere Estate

Day 5, January 25 ▶ Drive and Trek to Lockhart Tea Estate (5,726')

We drive for about an hour to the Lockhart Tea Estate (5,726'). Setting off on foot, we hike through tea plantations, following undulating trails through settlements where we stop for tea at a tea worker's colony. Later we visit the nearby Tea Factory and experience the tea processing and tea tasting. From the factory, we pass through a small forested area and enter into the tea plantations



again. A gentle climb brings us to our lovely campsite in a clearing amidst the tea bushes. We have amazing views of the Western Ghat Mountains.

B,L,D...Camp

Hiking Details: 3.5-4 hours, 5.4 miles, 1,672' ascent

Day 6, January 26 ▶ Trek to Rhodo Valley (8053') via Meesapulimalai (8642')

From Camp we board our 4 wheel drive vehicles for a one hour drive through tea estates and on to the National Sanctuary as we climb toward

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the Rhodo Valley. We stop at Base camp and after some tea and snacks we start our days hike. We start on a narrow trail through the forest of pine, rhododendron, eucalyptus, and mimosa, climbing gradually to the foothills of Meesapulimalai, the second highest peak in South India at 8,642 feet. We hike an undulating trail through rolling grassland and cross through the shola (tropical montane) forest on the ridge, which offers a spectacular view of both the lowlands of Tamil Nadu and the majestic peaks of the Western Ghats. As we near the peak of Meesapulimalai, the climb gets steeper, but the views get better. Once at the top, we can look down on the Kolukkumalai tea estate and the adjacent peaks. Spending some time at the summit, we descend a bit for a picnic lunch. Continuing towards Rhodo Valley the ridge trail offers spectacular views of the silent valley below with its tea plantation. Continuing on an undulating trail through the grassland we cross a small stream and climb through a sparsely vegetated hill. A short downhill through rhododendron and pine forest brings us to our camp near a stream.

B,L,D...Camp

Hiking Details: 6-7 hours, 5.4 miles, 2,512'/1,312' ascent/descent

Day 7, January 27 ▶ Trek to Ellapatti | Camp Foot Print (6627')

We follow a well-defined, undulating path through a forested area, contouring ridges with panoramic views in all directions. We have a good chance of spotting some wildlife here, since there is water, forest, and open land. After ascending to a height of 8,356 feet, we start our long descent to the tea plantation village of Ellapatti, crossing small pockets of forest and grassland. As we descend, we have a constant view of Ellapatti tea estate and the lakes of Kundala and Mattupetty dam. Then following the plantation trail, we make a gentle climb for about 15 minutes to arrive at our camp (6,627'), a haven for bird watchers with a breathtaking view.

B,L,D...Camp Foot Print (Camp)

Hiking Details: 5.5-6 hours, 8.1 miles, 1,125'/3,197' ascent/descent

Day 8, January 28 ▶ Trek to Ellapatti | Madurai

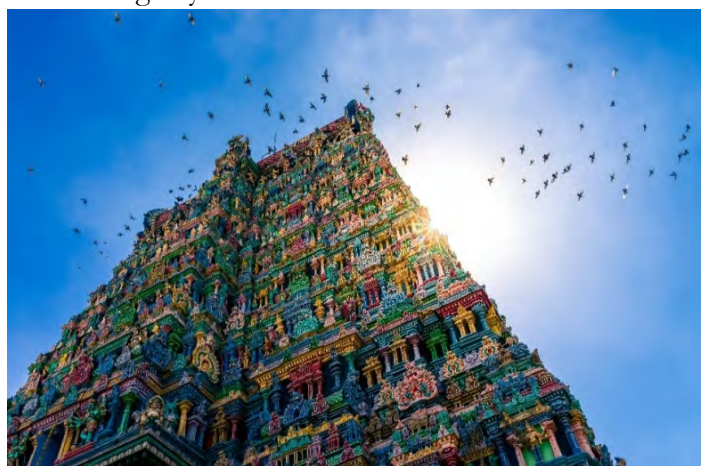
Our last day on trek brings us back to a beautiful hilltop to experience breathtaking views of the Western Ghats. Then it's on to Ellapatti, where we end the trek and board vehicles for the drive to Madurai. After a short break in Munnar we continue to Madurai, crossing the state border near Poppara and descending toward the lowlands. Heading down the mountains, we find ourselves on the vast plains of Tamil Nadu, with coconut plantations, sugarcane fields, and paddy fields as far as the eye can see. Soon we will be in the busy and bustling city of Madurai.

B,L,D...Taj Gateway Hotel

Hiking/Driving Details: 2-2.5 hours (3.25 miles)/5 hours (93 miles)

Day 9, January 29 ▶ Madurai

The holy temple town Madurai, apparently named for the nectar that flowed from Shiva's hair as a blessing for the new city, was built by the Pandyan king Kulasekara. The oldest living city in the Indian peninsula, it was the capital of a kingdom that ruled much of South India during the



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4th century BC, and conducted trade as far afield as Greece, Rome, and China. Along with great wealth, Madurai produced great festivals of poetry and writing—the Tamil Sangams, the first of which are said to have been held two millennia ago.

Madurai is famous for its ancient Meenakshi Temple, which celebrates the love of the Meenakshi goddess and her groom, Sundareswarar, an avatar of Lord Shiva. We'll visit this fine example of Dravidian architecture, with its *gopurams* (pyramidal gateway towers) covered with images of gods, goddesses, animals, and mythical creatures. Nearby is the Tirumalai Nayak Mahal/Palace, built in the 17th century by Tirumalai Nayak in Indo-Saracenic style. The architectural genius of the Meenakshi temple, the multi-colored gopurams of the other temples, classical Carnatic music and *bharatnatyam* (a classical dance born in the temples of South India), and colorful local markets are some of the “must-sees” of Madurai. This is also the best place to tuck into some excellent traditional vegetarian fare.

B,L,D...Taj Gateway Hotel

Day 10, January 30 ▶ Madurai | Thekkady

We drive to Thekkady through tea and cardamom plantations and roads lined with eucalyptus trees. We'll stop for lunch at one of the spice plantations, and then continue to our hotel, a comfortable retreat located near Periyar National Park. In the evening, we can take a walk to the cardamom plantations.

B,L,D...CGH Earth Spice Village

Driving Details: 3-4 hours (87 miles)



Day 11, January 31 ▶ Thekkady | Periyar National Park

Today we explore Periyar National Park, one of the best managed parks in South India. One of the few habitats remaining for wild tigers in India (and the world, for that matter), Periyar is part of Project Tiger, a wildlife conservation project designed to protect Royal Bengal tigers from extinction. Set high in the mountains of the Western Ghats, this protected area covers some 300 square miles, out of which a bit less than half forms part of the core zone known as the Periyar National Park and Tiger Reserve. Famous for its picturesque lake and, of course, the tiger (which number about 40), the park is also home to various other kinds of mammals. The most well known of these are the park's famous herds of wild Asiatic elephants, which often come to bathe in Periyar Lake. Other mammals found here include gaur (Indian bison), sambar, barking deer, wild dogs, mongoose, and leopards.

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Making an early start, we first drive to Gavi (1.5 hours). Reaching the game reserve, we have breakfast and take a hike through the forest with a local guide who will be happy to share his knowledge of the forest with us while we walk. The pug marks of the tiger or the sightings of elephants or Indian bison will surely make us appreciate the great forests in India and understand the majesty of the tropical forest. We return by mid-afternoon to the hotel, with the option of making the rounds of this small town to look for spices.

B,L,D...CGH Earth Spice Village

Day 12, February 1 ▶ Kumarakom

A two-hour drive brings us to Kumarakom, a small town on the shores of Lake Vembanad that's also known for its bird sanctuary. Between November and March, Kumarakom is home to numerous migratory flocks, many of which fly in from Siberia. Regularly seen here are little cormorants, darters (or snake birds), night herons, golden-backed woodpeckers, tree pies, and crow pheasants. We stay at Coconut Lagoon, a resort surrounded by canals. In the evening, we enjoy a Kalairipattu show, an ancient tradition of martial training and discipline. It is still taught throughout Kerala, and some believe it is the forerunner of all martial arts. Its roots can be traced back to the 12th century, when skirmishes among the many feudal principalities in the region were common.

B,L,D...CGH Earth Coconut Lagoon



Day 13, February 2 ▶ Kumarakom | Backwater Cruise

Lake Vembanad is at the heart of Kerala's backwaters, a 560-mile network of waterways that forms a natural transportation network that fringes the coast and trickles far inland. Long before the advent of roads, these waterways were the slippery highways of Kerala, and many villagers today still use paddle-power as transport. Trips through the backwaters cross shallow, palm-fringed lakes studded with cantilevered Chinese fishing nets, and travel along narrow,

shady canals where coir (coconut fiber), copra (dried coconut meat), and cashews are loaded onto boats. Along the way are small villages with mosques, churches, temples, and schools, villagers going about their daily chores, and tiny settlements where people live on narrow spits of reclaimed land only a few yards wide. Today we'll cruise through the surrounding canals in a small canoe or country boat, interacting with local villagers and watching birdlife at the Kumarakom bird sanctuary.

B,L,D...CGH Earth Coconut Lagoon

Day 14, February 3 ▶ Mararikulam

Drive 45 minutes (30 miles) to Mararikulam, a beach resort, where we can cycle to the surrounding villages or take a leisurely walk along the beautiful beach. Our resort is set on 30 acres with coconut groves, lily ponds, fruit trees, and a large organic farm.

B,L,D...CGH Earth Marari Beach Resort

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Day 15, February 4 ▶ Mararikulam

Today we'll take the day off to relax and unwind at our beach resort. In the evening we'll have a festive farewell dinner celebrating our sojourn among the wonders of South India.

B,L,D...CGH Earth Marari Beach Resort

Day 16, February 5 ▶ Cochin | USA

After lunch, transfer two hours to the Cochin airport for late evening/or middle of the night flight to the USA.

B,L...

(You will arrive home in the USA on February 6)



LAND COST

\$8195 per person (6-9 members)

\$7895 per person (10-14 members)

\$2395 single supplement

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations

*Should you choose to pay with credit card there will be a service charge of 3%, the fee we incur from the bank.

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Note—Prices listed are subject to change. We are occasionally faced with unavoidable cost increases due to fuel increases, costs of services or currency fluctuations that we cannot absorb. We will, however, do everything we can to keep prices the same as published.

LAND COST INCLUDES...

- Expert leadership of Cathy Ann Taylor plus a knowledgeable local guide
- Accommodations in hotels, guest houses and/or tents
- Trekking arrangements
- Meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Drinking water in vehicles for the drives
- Ground transportation throughout by air-conditioned vehicle
- Sightseeing and activities as noted, including backwater cruise in Kumarakom

LAND COST DOES NOT INCLUDE...

International airfare to Cochin and return; India visa fee; one dinner and lunch in Cochin; trip insurance; meals not noted on the itinerary; optional tipping to leader and local guide and staff; excess baggage charges; airport taxes (if any); cost of medical immunizations; and items of a personal nature (mineral water, sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

TRIP PAYMENT SCHEDULE

At time of reservation25% of land cost
120 days prior to departure25% of land cost
90 days prior to departure.....Balance

CANCELLATION FEE SCHEDULE

From time of reservation
until 90 days prior to departure25% of land cost
89-60 days prior to departure.....50% of land cost
59 days or fewer prior to departure.....100% of land cost

TRAVEL PROTECTION

We recommend that you purchase a travel protection plan to help protect you and your travel investment against the unexpected. For your convenience, we offer travel protection through Travelex Insurance Services. For more information on the available plans or to enroll, go to <http://www.travelexinsurance.com/index.aspx?location=05-0642&go=> or contact Travelex Insurance Services at 800-228-9792 and reference location number 05-0642. Travel Insurance is underwritten by, Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance Company, NAIC #22276. 55Y

EXPERT LEADERSHIP

Expert leadership is the key to every successful trip. Cattara attracts knowledgeable and gifted leaders who are passionate about guiding trips and truly enjoy sharing the experience with others. They understand the cultures and traditions they work in and are a fountain of information. In

addition to making sure everything runs smoothly and safely, Cattara guides enhance your experience by being educators, companions, and the best of friends.

TRIP LEADER



Cathy Ann Taylor, a high altitude trekking & cultural guide for the last 30 years will be leading his trip. Cathy Ann has trekked all over Nepal, Tibet, India and Bhutan, with well over 200 trips in the Himalayas (she still considers the Himalayas her “second home”)! She has also hiked extensively in the European Alps (Tour du Mont Blanc—five times, The Haute Route, Gran Paradiso, and the Dolomites—two times), the Georgian Caucasus—four times, South America (15 trips in Peru, 1 in Patagonia), Morocco—two times and Uganda & Rwanda—three times. A devout hiker and mountain biker, she leaves no trail undiscovered, and her passion for the mountains, caring nature, and boundless energy are renowned. Her experience, knowledge, positive attitude (she can find the good in anything!), and her wonderful rapport with the local staff will enhance your experience. With the help of caring and like-minded individuals she has been able to manage the sponsorship of nineteen remote village children, all of whom are in boarding school in Nepal or in universities in India, Nepal, and the United States. She consistently gets rave reviews from members of her groups and has quite a following. Cathy Ann is active in the Breast Cancer Prevention Partners and has participated in sixteen expeditions, including Mount McKinley, Mount Cho Oyu, Mount Fuji, Mount Shasta, and Mount Rainier, which helped increase awareness of breast cancer (she alone has raised over \$775,000 for the cause!). Cat’s special trekking program, Sacred Treks, benefits Breast Cancer Prevention Partners (formerly the Breast Cancer Fund). Past trips include Bhutan, Mont Blanc, Peru, Everest, Ladakh, Mustang, Georgian Caucasus, Sikkim, Dolomites, Cordillera Blanca, and Annapurna Sanctuary treks, and the program has raised over \$775,000. Cathy Ann has also been active in the American Himalayan Foundation and has helped raised \$20,000 for their STOP Girl Trafficking project. She has also reached the summit of Ama Dablam (22,500') in Nepal and Argentina's Aconcagua (22,834'), the highest peak in South America. Cathy Ann received an honorable mention in *Hooked on the Outdoors* magazine's Outdoor Person of the Year Awards, and also received a letter of recognition for her fundraising and environmental work from Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi.

PHYSICAL EXPECTATIONS

You should be an experienced hiker in good physical condition. This trip is easy to moderate in nature, with four days of trekking. Hikes each day last between 4-7 hours on undulating trails. The altitude is not very high—the highest elevation is 8,642 feet, on our climb of Meesapulimalai. For physical preparation, we recommend regular cardiovascular exercise for one hour at least 4-5 times a week. We suggest stair climbing, running, and mountain biking on hills, squats, and lunges or elliptical or treadmill training in the gym. And, of course, the best way to train for a trek is to go hiking! We recommend you get out on the trails at least once a week. Wear your boots and daypack and pick some trails with hills so you can strengthen your leg muscles and build up your stamina. We believe other important pre-requisites are a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. There will be a 4 x 4 support vehicle to transport your luggage from one camp to another. If the need arises you can always take a ride and skip the days walk.

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TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

In addition to a passport, valid for at least six months beyond the date of completion of the trip, you will need a visa for India. Visas cannot be obtained upon arrival at the airport, so you will need to get one in advance. You can contact your local Indian consulate for information or use the services of a visa agency. We recommend CIBT: <http://cibtvisas.com/> or Trivisa Outsourcing (www.trivisaoutsourcing.com). Both agencies have detailed information on obtaining visas and the correct forms.

To help you complete the application, we have listed the answers for certain questions. Please mark NA or NO on any line that does not apply to you.

Question #24, check “Tourist”

Question #25 (Place you want to visit), enter Cochin

Question #26, check “six month” (they may issue 5 or 10 year visas that is even better)

Question #31 (Object of journey), enter “tourist”

Question #37, enter Rimo Expeditions, 229 DLF Galleria, DLF Phase IV, Gurgaon - 122022, India
Tel: 011 91 124 2806027

We recommend making a photocopy of the photo page of your passport and carrying it separately from your passport. If your passport is lost or stolen, a photocopy will help the local consulate speed up authorization for replacement. Also bring several spare passport photos—they’re handy in case of unexpected visa or permit requirements.

Note—most countries requiring visas require a completely blank page on which to stamp the visa, so your passport should contain at least one blank page for each country you plan to visit.

AIR TRAVEL

Airfare is not included in the land cost of the trip. For air reservations, please contact the airlines directly, either by phone or via the Internet. Plan your arrival in Cochin by the early afternoon of Day 1 (January 31). Many travelers elect to use their “frequent flyer” miles when traveling, but please check with us before purchasing or obtaining your tickets. We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule. Note—Names on air tickets and passports must match!

MEDICAL MATTERS

No vaccinations are currently required to enter India, but immunizations for typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A, and polio are *recommended*. These regulations and recommendations change frequently, so please check with your local health department or the CDC for more information (www.cdc.gov). In addition, malaria is a potential health risk in India at altitudes lower than 2,000 meters (6,561’). The CDC website has good information on this and you should confer with your physician for further advice regarding malaria prophylaxis and recommended immunizations.

Please advise us of any pre-existing medical conditions that may affect your health on the trip (recent injuries or surgeries, chronic illnesses, etc.). Hospital facilities for serious medical emergencies may be far away and evacuation can be difficult (and expensive).

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To avoid intestinal problems while on the trip, do not drink tap water or even use it to brush your teeth. In Cochin and other towns, drink bottled water only. You must be careful when eating out in India, too. That said, there are many wonderful restaurants and your trip leader will give you more guidelines on staying healthy while in India.

We recommend you bring your own personal first-aid kit, which should include antibiotics (Cipro, Azithromycin, or other), pain killers, and allergy medicines if you are prone to allergic reactions. The trip leader will also carry a basic kit for emergencies but will not have any prescription medications to dispense to you.

MONEY MATTERS

You should bring enough money for any souvenirs you may buy, plus a few meals that are not included in the cost of the trip (e.g. various meals in Cochin, or meals and accommodation en route to India). Depending on how much of a shopper you are, \$600-\$700 is usually enough for incidentals and souvenirs. You should bring an additional amount for gratuities to the trip leader and local guide. Trip members often ask for guidelines on tipping the trip leaders. Typically, trip members tip the trip leader at least US \$550 (presenting this personally rather than collectively gives you the opportunity to say thank you individually and is greatly appreciated. Cathy Ann will be your trip leader and she'll work tirelessly in the field to ensure you have the best possible experience. Trip members tip at least \$325 toward a group tip for the trekking staff, local guide, and drivers, preferably paid in local currency or USD, as traveler's checks are impossible for the trekking staff to exchange.

When on your own, it is customary to tip 5-10% on the restaurant bills. Tips for porters can range between US\$0.50 and US\$1.00 per bag. Taxi drivers do not expect a tip.

Bring some of your money in traveler's checks and most in cash. Credit cards (American Express, Visa, and MasterCard) are also accepted at the large hotels. The currency in India is the *Rupee* (approximately 65 rupees to the dollar).

ATM machines are available in Cochin at the airport and in the city.

WEATHER & CLIMATE

February marks the end of winter in Kerala as summer sets in. The average daytime temperature will be close to 90°F and minimum around 68°F except at Munnar. Minimum temperatures while trekking will be between 50-60°F and maximum between 68-77°F.

INCIDENTALS

Laundry: Laundry service is available at the hotels. Synthetic fabrics are the easiest to wash, and they dry quickly.

Electricity: India is on the 220V system. Sockets are usually the round two- or three-pin variety, but they vary. If you are planning to use something like a hairdryer or electric shaver at the hotel), bring

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a converter and a selection of plug adapters (you can buy these in drugstores or travel specialty stores in the U.S.). Power outages are common.

Time Zones: India is Greenwich Mean Time plus six hours. That means if it's 8:00 pm in Cochin, it's 9:00 am in New York and 6:00 am in California.

Environmental Responsibility: We ask you to carry out whatever you carry in, including non-biodegradable items such as batteries, flashlight bulbs, empty plastic containers, and so on. India does not have the proper facilities to process this kind of waste and your throwaways will end up in the river or tossed down a hillside. Please pack Ziploc bags for your own personal garbage.

SHOPPING

India is a fun place to shop—street vendors and emporiums are everywhere you look. Craft items to buy include beautiful hand-woven Kashmiri carpets, traditional brass cooking vessels, semi-precious gemstones, silks, and jewelry.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT LIST

Packing Notes

It's best to go as light as possible and take only the essentials. Excess baggage can be a burden, not only to you but to support personnel.

Always bring all irreplaceable items, such as camera, medications, important documentation, and trekking boots in your carryon luggage.

Luggage

- Duffel bag, large enough to hold all your clothes and gear. It should have a full-length zipper (for easy access). Wheeled luggage is okay as our bags will be transported by vehicles.
- Daypack with a capacity of about 2,000-2,500 cubic inches, with a good padded waist belt. It can double as your carryon bag.*
- Spare roll-up duffel (optional). This is essential if you wish to bring home those great souvenirs! It should be lockable.

Clothing Notes

We suggest men and women dress in comfortable, loose-fitting long pants. It is culturally insensitive to wear skin-tight pants or skimpy shorts and tops—please do not go bare-chested or show any signs of nudity.

We haven't included quantities for each item listed. Use your own judgment, based on the expected weather conditions, your personal needs, and the overall weight restrictions for your luggage.

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Underwear

- Regular underwear. Synthetics are easier to wash and dry.

Socks

- Hiking socks (synthetic or wool/synthetic). We recommend you bring two - three pair.
- Athletic socks (synthetic for easy washing and drying) that are suitable for your walking (not hiking) shoes.
- We will be providing leech socks for the trek.

Shirts

- Long-sleeved, cotton or synthetic shirts and T-shirts for trekking and touring.
- Short-sleeved, synthetic T-shirts (for warmer days).

Pants

- Full-length pants, preferably of quick-drying synthetic fabric.

Miscellaneous Items

- Swimsuit for the pool at the hotels and the beaches.
- Lightweight smart casual / city clothes for hotels & tours.

Outerwear

- Light fleece or thermal jacket.
- Light rain/wind shell (must fit over bulky clothing).
- Light rain/wind pants, preferably with full-length side zipper (must fit over your other pants).
- Synthetic sweatshirt or pullover.

Head Gear

- Sun hat with wide brim, preferably with a chin strap to keep it from blowing off.
- Bandanna. A generally useful item—it will keep your neck from getting sunburned and can double as a hand towel in the field.

Footwear

Please break new boots in well before the trip.

- Comfortable walking shoes or tennis shoes for touring and traveling.
- Lightweight hiking boots with padded ankle, good arch support, and lug sole for traction.
- Sandals or flip-flops for beachwear

Other Items

- Lightweight sleeping bag (for use in the basic lodges or camping).
- Water bottles, 1- or 1.5-quart capacity. Make sure they are leak-proof, and heavy duty. Bring 2 and mark them with your name or initials as several people may have the same bottle.
Note—CamelBaks or other bladder hydration systems are not recommended, as they often break or leak, are difficult to fill with boiled water, and are hard to keep clean.

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- Hiking sticks—optional but highly recommended. They help relieve the impact on your knees during long downhills; they are also useful on uphill. Practice with them before the trip.
- Toiletry kit—biodegradable soap, toothbrush, etc. Women should bring any feminine products they need because they're not readily available locally.
- Purell hand sanitizer for quick hand washing and hygiene (a must!).
- Muscle relaxant sprays work well to repel leeches.
- Personal medical kit.
- Ace bandage or brace if you're prone to sore knees or ankles.
- Sunglasses (100% UVA/UVB protected).
- Spare pair of prescription glasses, prescription sunglasses, or contact lenses.
- Sunscreen lotion and lipstick of SPF 25 or higher (UVA and UVB protection).
- Mosquito repellent.
- Small headlamp with spare batteries.
- Ziploc bags are great for small items and camera gear; nylon stuff sacks are also handy.
- Small padlocks or combination locks for your duffels.
- Swiss Army-type pocket knife.
- Extra passport photos. Keep them with your travel documents as you may need them throughout your journey.
- Money belt or neck pouch to store cash.

Optional Travel Accessories

- Camera and plenty of memory cards and extra batteries.
- Pair of compact binoculars (lots of birdwatching).
- Powdered electrolyte mixes for your water.
- Your favorite snacks or candy.
- Reading and writing material.

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