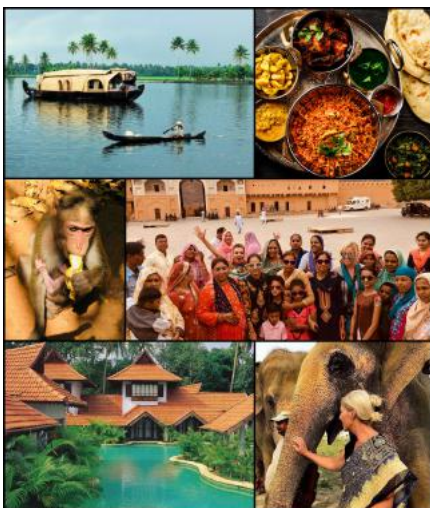


"Floating Through Kerala" Authentic India

Nov 12-22, 2025

REGISTER NOW



Namaste! Come stretch your horizons on a 10-day adventure like no other. The fascinating world of South India is like discovering another planet. Each day with locals is a lesson in history as if time has stood still. But it's also about scenic beauty. From the shorelines of Malabar to the undulating hills of Munnar, the shimmering waters of Kumarakom to the vibrancy of Kochi... this is the Real India. An India that is wrapped in tranquility.

Who wouldn't love the Hindu temples, elephants, Ayurvedic spas, wildlife reserves, colorful bazaars, cultural villages and nature walks along the way? Our past groups couldn't get enough of this unique vacation experience. And this year, we enhanced it all. We begin with crazy fun in Mumbai on our Slumdog Millionaire tour and private Bollywood dance class. Then we head south for a jeep safari through lush spice plantations, AFS yoga and "Dosa" cooking class, a day with local fishermen and craftsmen, evening dance performances, and more. This getaway is packed with diverse experiences!

Highlights—the iconic voyage on our luxury houseboats through the channels of the intensely green backwaters of glorious Kerala! Imagine floating through mirror-smooth channels and lagoons while witnessing traditionally dressed villagers harvesting rice, washing their laundry or praying on shore. All from the comfort of elegantly converted rice barges, complete with our own captains and private chefs. This one should be at the top of anyone's bucket list. The region of Kerala is called "God's own country." You will feel such a welcome from locals who say, "Atithi devo Bhaho," which means "Our guests are gods." And you will feel such status as we end at our enchanting 5-star resort in Kumarakom, set on a crystal lake of lotus blossoms bordered by coconut palms and a sky filled with spectacular birdlife. Voted as India's finest resort, both Queen Elizabeth and Prince Charles have stayed here, and now you will be treated as royalty as well. It's paradise!

November has the best weather to visit, and the air is easy. This is for our exotic travelers who want to bounce far. But if you haven't visited the Taj Mahal, it's easy to extend three days to Agra or anywhere in India at trip's end. Friends know I love India, a world in one country, and I often tell them, "India's soul is found in the south." It's totally authentic and don't forget the delicious fresh food you'll taste daily.

India is deeply addictive. With luscious landscapes to soul-stirring spirituality, it's always a place to expect the unexpected. This trip is a feast for all five senses. Come join us to experience the Extraordinary for some new forever memories never to be forgotten.





Mumbai - Periyar - Allepey - Kumarakom - Kochi

The Kerala backwaters are one of India's most unique attractions for visitors. A chain of canals extends 1500 km through verdant jungle with a network of 44 Rivers, lagoons and lakes. Centuries ago, traditional houseboats were crafted from coconut ropes called coir. Master craftsmen today have gained tremendous knowledge of these boats and navigating the waters. The backwaters are an inherent part of rural life. Mail, newspapers, meats to milk are delivered by boat. Christian missionaries share God's word in the same boat with brides and their wedding parties. See people swim, fish, sail, and bathe along the way. The language grace of our private AFS boats adds another dimension to your cruise through the canals of shimmering emerald waters.

AYURMANA

The Ayurmana - the heritage retreat of Ayurvedic healing at Kumarakom Lake Resort. Every beam, every wall of the Ayurmana palisades with the historic powers of the oldest of sciences. The 200-year-old Ayurmana, had been the home of the Chathamangalathu Mana, a family of renowned Ayurvedic practitioners. And this rich legacy lives on, as the Ayurmana stands with pride as the renowned Ayurveda spa of equally befitting calibre. The exquisite 'Nalukettu' or four-sided mansion had been transported in its entirety from its original location to Kumarakom Lake Resort, and had been recreated with careful detail and expertise.





LUXURY

Kumarakom Lake Resort, acclaimed as the finest luxury heritage resort in India, nestles on the serene banks of the Lake Vembanad, the vast stretch of tranquil, emerald green backwaters, in one of India's popular holiday spots, Kerala.

Sprawling across 25 acres of lush greenery and set in soul-stirring ambience, Kumarakom Lake Resort, the winner of the much acclaimed World Travel Award as India's Leading Resort for four years, exudes the charm of Kerala's true heritage while offering a complete range of New Age amenities for a luxuriously comfortable stay. Luxury-laden rooms, villas and suites; Ayurmana, the Ayurveda Spa; swimming pools galore; health club; multi-cuisine and specialty restaurants; traditional Kerala teashop and countless other attractions in and around the resort offer you the simple luxuries of life, in the grandeur of the royalty of yore.

KUMARAKOM


None less than National Geographic Traveler has claimed Kerala as one of the must-see paradises of the world.

For administrative reasons, Kerala is divided into fourteen districts, each boasting its own unique bouquet of tourism products. Kumarakom, and Kumarakom Lake Resort, are in the district of Kottayam.


Kumarakom, an enchanting village set on the banks of the Vembanad Lake is wrapped in a quaint charm all its own. With soothing backwaters, thick mangrove forests, green paddy fields and ripe coconut groves as its accessories.

A mere short boat ride away is the world famous Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary, home to the Cormorants, Egrets, Darters, Herons, Teals, etc. and migratory birds like the Siberian Storks.


Access to Kumarakom is just as easy, being only 72 kilometres away from the Cochin International Airport.



Winner of the World Travel Award as India's Leading Resort



National Award Winner as Best 5 Star Hotel in India

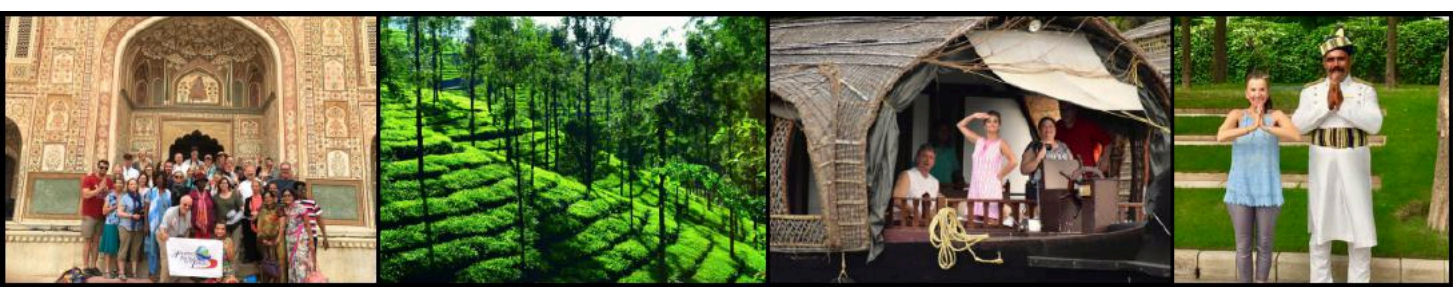


Top 25 Resorts in Asia - Conde Nast Traveler



REGISTER NOW

Our Glorious AFS Itinerary



Tap for a printable PDF Itinerary

12 NOV – Fly USA to Mumbai

Remember that flights from the U.S. to Mumbai are overnight. You will need to depart by November 12th at the latest to arrive in time for our trip to begin.



13 NOV - WELCOME TO INDIA!

Welcome to Mumbai! Previously known as Bombay, Mumbai is India's financial capital and a dynamic city of contrasts, with a melting pot of cultures, languages and cuisines. Skyscrapers and historic colonial architecture blend with modern infrastructure. Its bustling streets are filled with a rich tapestry of cultures, cuisines, and languages, reflecting the city's status as a melting pot of

diversity.

Transfer to the Novotel Mumbai Airport, which is just minutes away. Most flights arrive late in the evening. This is a free day to help adjust to the time.

Mumbai, the vibrant heart of India, offers an exhilarating blend of cultures, cuisines, and experiences. The city's iconic landmarks, such as the Gateway of India and Haji Ali Dargah, provide a glimpse into its rich history and diverse architectural influences. From the bustling streets of Colaba to the tranquil beauty of the Hanging Gardens, Mumbai's contrasts captivate the senses. Whether savoring spicy street food, exploring colorful markets, or immersing themselves in Bollywood culture, you'll find Mumbai a fascinating and unforgettable destination.



Overnight at [Novotel Mumbai Airport Hotel](#) (2 Nights)

Our hotel offers modern amenities and a convenient way to meet with the group. It has spacious rooms and excellent dining options to provide a comfortable stay. Enjoy the rooftop pool and fitness center to help you get totally rested.



14 NOV - BOMBAY CITY TOUR, ELEPHANT ISLAND, BOLLYWOOD **B/D**

After breakfast, we'll enjoy a day of exploring the best of Mumbai, starting with the amazing Elephanta Island. A short ferry ride across Mumbai Harbor will transport us to this fascinating UNESCO World Heritage Site, known for its intricate rock-cut sculptures and temples carved into caves dating back to the 5th to 8th centuries AD. The caves, with their verandas, pillars and chambers, all pay honor of Lord Shiva whose form is celebrated with a huge 18-foot statue in their midst.

Back in the city, we'll have a City Tour before visiting the captivating Prince of Wales Museum. Designed in 1905, the complex is comprised of three main sections: Art, Archaeology and Natural history and includes fine examples of Indian silver and brass, jade and tapestries. We'll also delve into the life and works of Mahatma Gandhi at the small Mani Bhawan Museum before having our senses bombarded at the bustling and fabulous Crawford market. Time permitting, we'll also visit the set for the movie.



A true highlight comes this evening as we show off our best dance skills at a lively Bollywood Dance Class! These trendy dances have exploded in popularity globally now, and your video dancing will surely impress your friends back home. In the 90-minute class, we'll learn some signature Bollywood moves you can perform back home as well. After working up an appetite, we'll enjoy a scrumptious Welcome Dinner featuring local cuisine to get to know our fellow travelers.

Dance from "Slumdog Millionaire"

Overnight at Novotel Mumbai Airport hotel



15 NOV - FLY TO COCHIN, CITY TOUR, ANCIENT ARTS

B


We'll have an early breakfast so we can catch our morning flight to Cochin (or Kochi), a city known as the "Queen of the Arabian Sea." Our first Instagramable stop will be at Chottanikkara Bhagavathy Temple to seek Hindu blessings from the temple elephant!

Midday, we check into the Fragrant Nature Kochi hotel overlooking Vembanad Lake. This beautiful property with its colonial architect has a pool as well as rooftop dining.

We'll have some time to settle in before our afternoon sightseeing tour. Our exploration of Kochi includes St. Francis Church. Built by the Portuguese in 1510, it is the oldest church constructed by the Europeans in India. We'll also tour the spectacular Mattancherry Palace, which the Portuguese built in 1555 as a gift to the Raja of Kochi. The central hall was the Coronation Hall of the Rajas and contains dresses, turbans and palanquins and murals from Hindu mythology.

Kochi's Jewish Synagogue was built in 1568 and contains historic scrolls of the Old Testament and a number of copper plates inscribed in Hebrew script. To soak in the rich history of this coastal region, our tour will end at the cantilevered Chinese fishing nets, which are the only remaining evidence of the Chinese contacts of ancient times in the region. Great photo ops here. Our evening is free to enjoy Cochin.

Overnight [Fragrant Nature Kochi](#) (1 Night)



Immerse yourself in Cochin's vibrant culture at **Fragrant Nature**, our luxurious haven in the city's heart. Stroll to iconic Fort Kochi, lively Jew Town, and Kerala's breathtaking backwaters from our prime location. Unwind in one of our three accommodation categories, all featuring modern amenities. Savor local flavors at our three dining options, including a rooftop restaurant with stunning views. Refresh in our pool, energize in the gym, or rejuvenate in the spa. Let us curate unforgettable experiences in and around Cochin, making your stay truly unforgettable.



16 NOV – JEEP SAFARI, ELEPHANTS, SPICE PLANTATIONS

B

Our morning will be spent driving through the Kerala countryside to Periyar National Park. Keep your eyes peeled for wildlife and we travel through jungles and fields. Our home for the next two days is Greenwoods Resort, a beautiful property surrounded by lush, verdant forests.

This afternoon's adventure includes a Jeep ride featuring a spice plantation tour as well as taking in panoramic views of Kerala. We'll get a firsthand look at the harvesting of a wide array of spices. You'll even have the chance to sample cardamom, pepper, clove, cinnamon, nutmeg, vanilla, and various medicinal plants. The fascinating process will help you understand why Kerala cuisine

differs so markedly from other Indian cuisines. Be sure to stock up on bargains for the freshest coffees, teas and all your spice needs. They make great souvenirs. The evening is yours to explore our wonderful resort.

Overnight: [Greenwood Resort](#) (2 nights)



Nestled among the lush greenery of Periyar, the **Greenwood Resort** offers a tranquil retreat from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Its eco-friendly design seamlessly blends into the surrounding natural beauty, providing guests with an immersive experience amidst the region's renowned flora and fauna. The hotel's commitment to sustainable practices ensures a guilt-free getaway, while its luxurious amenities guarantee a comfortable and rejuvenating stay. From guided nature walks to relaxing Ayurvedic massages, the Greenwood Hotel in Periyar is the perfect destination for those seeking an unforgettable blend of adventure and serenity in the heart of India's most stunning wilderness.

17 NOV – NATURE TREK & PERIYAR EXPLORATION **B/L**

It's time to get back to nature as we head into Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary for a short Nature Trek. It's the perfect chance to observe local birds, butterflies, elephants and other wildlife through various habitats. The landscape is incredible and is comprised of moist deciduous and evergreen forests.

We'll be back at the resort in time for lunch and a demonstration of the "Dosa" making process. These Indian crepes are delicious and will help satisfy our craving for traditional South Indian cuisine. Dosas are stocked with vegetables, meats and spices. It's my favorite Indian meal for breakfast and lunch!



We are free after lunch for swimming or spas. This evening, prepare to be fascinated by a Kalaripayattu Show – a demonstration of India's ancient martial art. Originating in 300 BC, this sport is still famous in Kerala. It is not just for self-defense but also teaches you a sense of discipline in your daily life.

Overnight at Greenwoods Resort

18 NOV - HOUSEBOATS VOYAGE, KERALA! **B/L/D**



We head out in the morning through the scenic countryside of Alleppey, arriving at our floating accommodations in the afternoon. Then, it's time for one of the most amazing "cruises" you will ever experience as we embark on our converted rice barges or "Kettuvallam," traveling through Kerala's most unique region – canals, lakes and coves of the backwaters. Along the palm-fringed jungle, stops will be made at local villages. Now converted to beautiful floating dwellings, these barges have everything we need, including our bedrooms and baths, a sundeck, open lounge, kitchenette and a full crew.

We'll set off at lunchtime and be served a piping hot meal on board as we meander through the tranquil backwaters. This is such a peaceful experience as we leisurely float through the placid waters, passing palm-fringed canals, lakes and villages. Dinner often includes fresh seafood and giant prawns prepared by our private chefs.

Overnight: Houseboat (We will use a combination of 3, 4 or 5-bedroom houseboats)

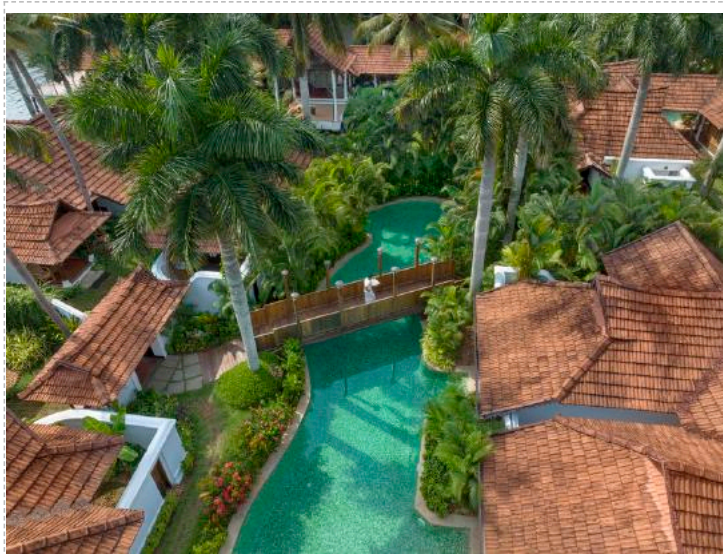
**19 NOV- PARADISE OF KUMARAKOM****B**

This morning after breakfast, we disembark from our houseboats and continue to Kumarakom Lake Resort, voted the finest heritage resort in India! Frequenting by the rich and famous guests, you'll get celebrity treatment here.

The exclusive 5-star property is simply stunning. See the peacocks and sambar deer roam the grounds with a spectacular birdlife above. We'll check in and then head out for a day hanging with the locals. A country canoe will take us through the narrow network of interconnected canals that run through the interiors of Kumarakom. The guided tour makes regular stops at local homes, introducing us to the simple pleasures of life in a village and rewarding us with an authentically local experience. Glide past farmers at work in lush paddy fields, banks studded with coconut groves, ancient Chinese fishing nets, water lilies, coir villages, rustic homes, and temples.

We'll enjoy live demonstrations of village activities and professions such as coconut tree climbing, toddy tapping, screw pine weaving, coconut leaf weaving, fishing techniques (using the net as well as the bow and arrow method), etc. – all especially organized for us by the villagers themselves. We'll return in the afternoon, so we'll have time to enjoy the stunning resort. Enjoy the evening with a swim in the warm pools and lakeside dinners under the stars.

Overnight at [Kumarakom Lake Resort](#) (2 nights)



Indulge in ultimate luxury at **Kumarakom Lake Resort**, where lavish villas boast private plunge pools and expansive outdoor spaces. Sumptuous interiors feature plush furnishings, sleek marble bathrooms, and modern amenities. Savor gourmet dining at the resort's esteemed restaurants, offering exquisite Indian and global cuisine. Unwind with rejuvenating Ayurvedic treatments and yoga sessions tailored to promote well-being. Enjoy personalized service and attention to detail, from private butlers to curated local excursions. Relax on the resort's private lake beach or by the infinity pool overlooking the serene waters. Experience a romantic sunset cruise or a peaceful fishing excursion on Vembanad Lake. At Kumarakom, luxury is found in both opulent amenities and immersion in nature's splendor.

20 NOV - FREE DAY IN KUMARAKOM**B**

Our day starts right with an early morning AFS Yoga session. Here in India, they take yoga seriously.

After a gourmet buffet breakfast of international cuisines, the rest of the day is ours to relax or explore. There is much to see and do in the surrounding area, or you may want to take advantage of the resort's world-class Ayurvedic Treatment Spa. Enjoy the infinity pools, fitness center, high tea, sunset boat cruises, visit to bird sanctuary and more. Our past groups loved the massages here. We even had tailors come to the resort to custom make us Indian saris crafted overnight in time to wear for our Farewell Dinner.

Overnight at Kumarakom Lake Resort

21 NOV - THE CULTURE OF KERALA**B/D**

We head back to Cochin for 2-hour drive. Check in to the Fragrant Nature Hotel. But today is about getting a better understanding of the local artistry and customs.

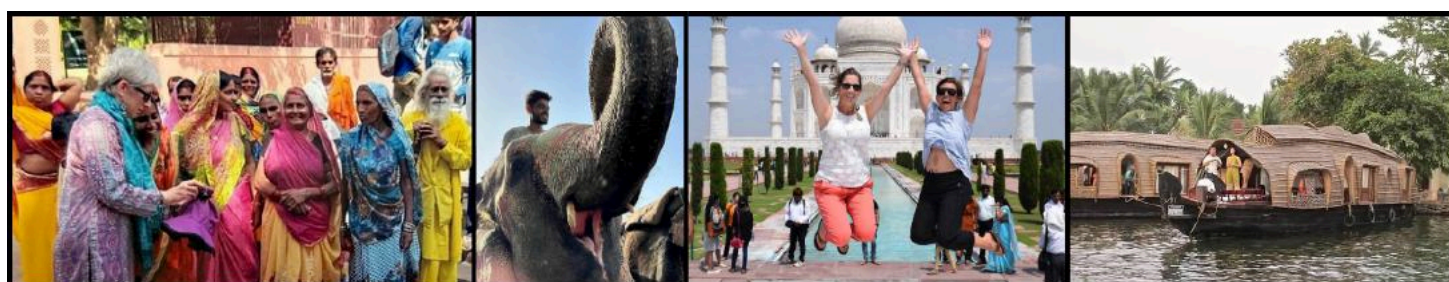
We will visit the ancient Handloom Village where the best quality fabric in Kerala is produced. The famous Chendamangalam weavers are experts in producing authentic Kerala clothing such as the 'set-mundu,' a two-piece outfit, as well as the kasavu saree for weddings. Time permitting, will enjoy traditional Indian rickshaw rides through the narrow streets.



This evening, we'll have a real treat as we watch the application of the intricate makeup for the Kathakali Dance Show and the performance itself. This 3000 year old dance is considered Kerala's classical dance drama, complete with impressive mudras, graceful and rhythmic movements, and colorful imagery taken from Hindu Mythology. Not a single word of dialogue is spoken, but the story is told through dance and movement.

We'll return to the hotel for our Farewell Dinner and toast our AFS friends goodbye from our most unique journey of a lifetime.

Overnight Fragrant Nature Kochi (1 Night)



22 NOV - FAREWELL TO COCHIN

B

Following breakfast, it is time to head back to the U.S. or on to your next adventure. We'll have one common group transfer to Kochi International airport for your flight to onward destination. (Our expert India ground team can arrange visit to the Taj Mahal if you like.)



Deposit: \$500

LAND PRICE: \$2495 per person, twins share plus \$125 air (air prices can change until ticketed). Based on a minimum of 20 participants. Single supplement \$1240, limit 3.

Gratuities for licensed guides, drivers, and porters of \$110 will be added to the invoice for your convenience.

Included: 9-nights first class accommodation including buffet breakfast daily and meals as stated above. Entrance fees. Ferry to Elephant Island. Elephant temple blessing. Jeeps in national park. Exclusive Bollywood and cooking class. 2 evening cultural performances. Craft villages. Dedicated tour manager throughout with AFS GTL.

Have you read the Trip Tips yet? Scroll to the top of the page and click the link.

Itineraries are prepared up to a year ahead and things can change. Modifications may be made.