



Tea pickers near Ooty

Spice, Trade and Botanicals Histories along the Malabar Coast

8 – 22 February 2021

2 nights Bangalore – 3 nights Mysore – 2 nights Ooty
– 2 nights Madurai – 3 nights Periyar – 2 nights Cochin



Jon Baines
tours



Meenakshi Temple in Madurai

The captivating Malabar Coast has been a meeting place of cultures throughout history. Its lush landscapes were fragrant with the precious spices that brought traders from far and wide, making this coastline rich in both wealth and culture. This tour takes you through the most evocative parts of Malabar, taking inspiration from *Hortus Malabaricus* (meaning “Garden of Malabar”).

***Hortus Malabaricus*, with its beautiful illustrations, captured the flora of the Western Ghats. It brought Malabar’s indigenous plant knowledge to the attention of the world. Nearly thirty years in the making, it was published in Amsterdam from 1678 to 1693. K. S. Manilal, the respected Cochin botanist, translated the Latin Hortus into English and Malayalam. Each day on the tour has a botanical theme, which will be discussed briefly before dinner on the previous day.**

Start your tour in Bangalore, traditionally known as the Garden City, and learn about plants that heal and restore balance in an Ayurvedic garden. Continue to sumptuous Mysore, famed for its palaces and its silk, sandalwood and spices,

where you will visit a palace, a sandalwood factory, take high tea in a former palace and watch the strictly traditional hand rolling techniques in a family run Ayurvedic plant.

Enjoy a spectacular journey into the Blue Mountains up to the hill station of Ooty to visit a tea plantation, an old cinchona factory and its famed botanical gardens. Head over the Cardamom Hills to Madurai, with its vividly magnificent temple, and discover the precious indigenous plants of the highlands, many of which were cleared for tea plantations. Continue to the highlands of Periyar on a spectacular drive past vivid green tea, coffee, rubber, pineapple and spice plantations, to visit the spice smallholding of Mr and Mrs Abraham and immerse yourself in the life of local spice producers. Head back down to the coast to see rubber being tapped and board a converted rice barge to cruise along the tranquil Keralan backwaters. Finish your tour in historic, languid Cochin – the birthplace of the *Hortus Malabaricus*.

After the tour, there is an optional extension on the tranquil beaches of Kerala.

Tour Leader

Carolyn Fry is an author and journalist specialising in science, conservation, natural history and adventure travel. She has written and contributed to 11 books, covering botanical explorers, the origins of plant-based foods and climate science. Carolyn has won many awards for her work, including the 2016 Garden Media Guild Award for Best Environmental Book for *Seeds: Safeguarding our Future*.

A former editor of *Geographical*, the magazine of the Royal Geographical Society, Carolyn has contributed to *New Scientist*, *BBC Wildlife*, *BBC History*, *The Times*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Independent on Sunday* and *Kew Magazine*, among others. Her work has taken her far and wide; from visiting the world's most remote post office in Antarctica, to following in the footsteps of Livingstone in Zambia and wandering ancient palm forests in the Seychelles.

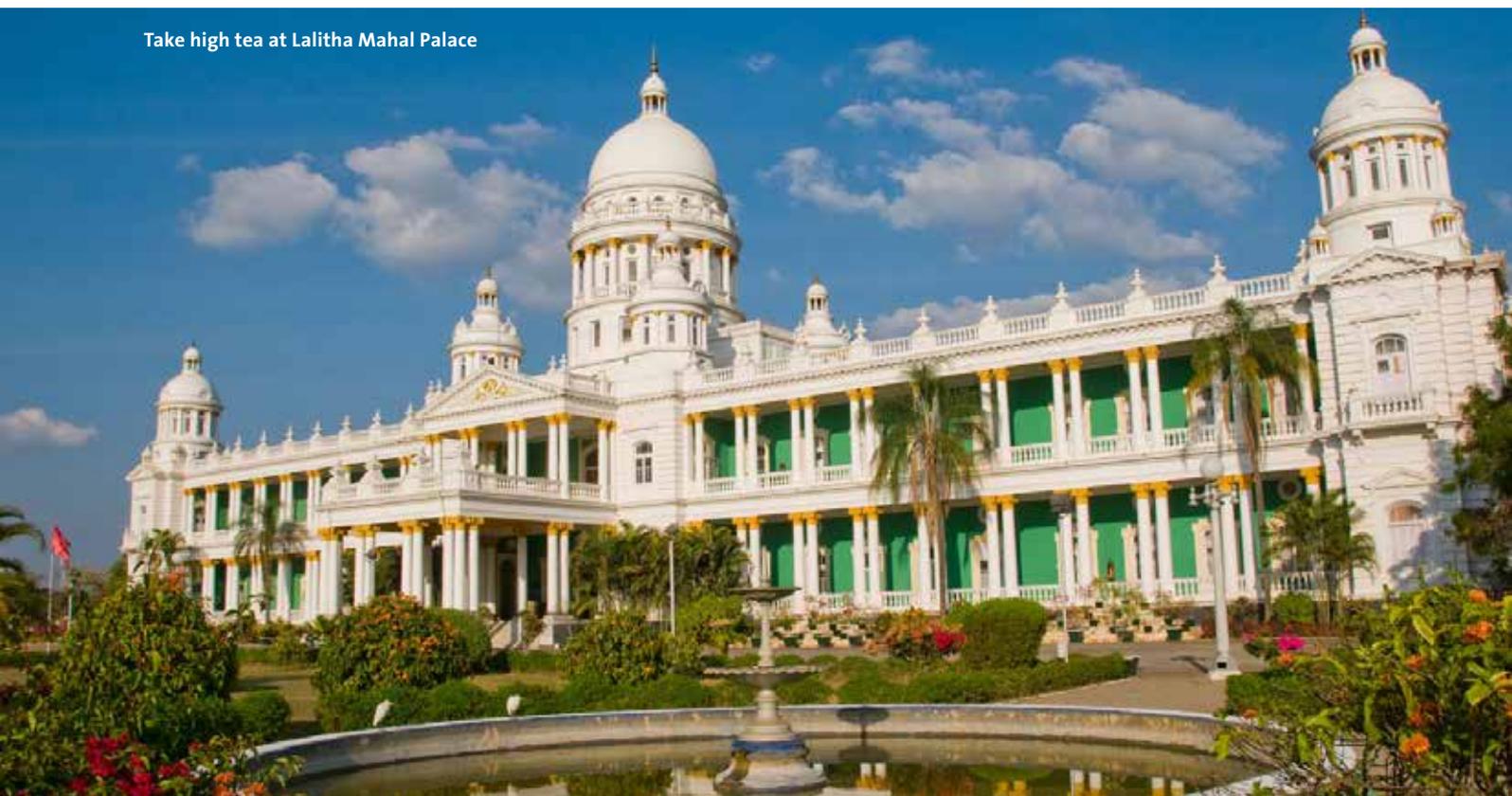


She has appeared on two BBC documentaries, to discuss the role of plants as commodities during the reign of the British Empire and the resurgence of tropical gardens.

“Without doubt a thoroughly enjoyable, inspirational and informative experience.”

Sonia Benster, *Histories along the Malabar Coast*, Jan 2020

Take high tea at Lalitha Mahal Palace



2 nights Bangalore – 3 nights Mysore – 3 nights Ooty – 1 night Madurai – 3 nights Periyar
– 2 nights Cochin



Day 1: Bangalore (Mon, 8 Feb) **D**

Botanical Discovery in the Land of the *Hortus Malabaricus*

Am: Arrive in Bangalore and transfer to the hotel

Pm: At leisure

Day 2: Bangalore (Tues, 9 Feb) **B D**

Botanical Art of the “Company School”

Am: Bangalore was traditionally known as the Garden City and today you will find out why. Visit the Lal Bagh Botanical Gardens, as well as the library with its excellent collection of botanical art.

Pm: Drive to the outskirts of Bangalore to visit the superb Amrutha Vana Ethnomedicinal Garden, which cultivates a vast and beautiful range of plants valued for their medicinal properties according to Ayurvedic principles. Tour the lush gardens and immaculately catalogued plant library and learn about some of the healing properties of different plants.

Day 3: Bangalore / Mysore (Wed, 10 Feb) **B D**

Silk: Made with Mulberries

Am: Drive to Mysore, stopping en route to visit the elegant summer palace - set in lovely

riverside gardens - of Sultan Tipu, notable for its teak pillars and ornamental frescoes depicting his struggle against the British.

Pm: Arrive in Mysore late afternoon and check into your hotel, before wandering through the colourful throngs of the Devaraj Market. Return through Mysore by tonga (horse and carriage) to your hotel.

Day 4: Mysore (Thurs, 11 Feb) **B AT**

Silk: Made with Mulberries

Am: Visit one of the most astonishingly ornate palaces in India, Mysore Palace.

Pm: Retire for sunset afternoon tea (AT) with a local flavour, with magnificent views overlooking Mysore from the grand Lalitha Mahal Palace

Day 5: Mysore (Fri, 12 Feb) **B D**

Ayurveda and its Botanicals

Am: Visit a third generation family run traditional Ayurvedic production centre, BV Pundit's of Mysore. This fascinating small factory is run on strict Ayurvedic principles and uses authentic methods of distilling and cooking the herbs, hand rolling the tablets, packaging, etc. The small centre is meticulously organised and everything is done by hand.

Pm: At leisure

Day 6: Mysore / Ooty (Sat, 13 Feb) **B D**

Gin and Tonic, Cinchona Bitters

Am: Drive into the Blue Mountains up to the hill station of Ooty. Known as the Queen of the Hill Stations, 'Snooty Ooty' is a cool, tranquil town surrounded by hills and tea slopes. Visit the old cinchona factory and enjoying dinner at the Savoy in the evening.

Pm: Stop to see the Naduvattam old cinchona factory before checking into the hotel

Eve: Dinner at the Savoy

Day 7: Ooty / Coonoor / Ooty
(Sun, 14 Feb)

B L

Tea: Two Leaves and a Bud in the South

Am: Take the toy train to Coonoor on an exhilarating switchback ride through the Blue Mountains. Visit a tea plantation and the tea factory to learn about production of this most essential of leaves

Pm: Lunch at the residence of William Graham McIvor, the founder of the Ooty Botanical Gardens. Return to Ooty and visit its famous botanical gardens, which were originally laid out by gardeners from Kew.

Day 8: Ooty / Madurai (Mon, 15 Feb)

B D

Planting Gardens

Am: Meet with Mr Bose, an ecologist at the indigenous plant nursery at Ooty, before driving across the lush Cardamom Hills to Madurai.

Pm: Arrive and check into the hotel and have dinner that evening.

Day 9: Madurai (Tues, 16 Feb)

B D

Hill Stations: Healing Nature

Am: Visit the soaring, brightly coloured Meenakshi Temple – one of the oldest and most significant Hindu temples in India.

Pm: Take a rickshaw ride, followed by a mouthwatering street food trail.

Day 10: Madurai / Periyar (Wed, 17 Feb)

B D

Curry: Making the Dish

Am: Set out for the highlands of Periyar on a spectacular drive past vivid green tea, coffee, rubber, pineapple and spice plantations.

Pm: Arrive and transfer to your hotel before seeing an explosively balletic performance of Kalari, or Kalaripayattu, a Keralan martial art.

Day 11: Periyar (Thurs, 18 Feb)

B L

Pepper: Kerala's Gift

Am: Visit Mr and Mrs Abraham and their local spice plantation. They have been proudly nurturing their smallholding for many years and were featured in Monty Don's

Around the World in 80 Gardens. Join Mr Abraham on a tour of his plants

Pm: Watch Mrs Abraham preparing a meal using their own spices, which you will then enjoy for lunch.

Day 12: Periyar (Fri, 19 Feb)

B D

Spice Plantations: Export Riches

Am: Periyar National Park is pristine and vast, home to herds of elephants and leopards among many other animals and plants. Take a guided nature walk with a local naturalist guide

Pm: Afternoon at leisure in the small attractive town of Periyar.

Day 13: Periyar / Backwaters

(Sat, 20 Feb)

B L D

Rubber: Tapping for Wealth

Am: Depart the cooler highlands for the backwaters, stopping on the way at a rubber plantation to see how rubber is tapped.

Pm: Continue to Alleppey and board a private converted rice barge. See Keralan life unfold as you drift past families swimming, fishing and washing in the canals, past vegetable-laden canoes, vivid green rice paddies and coconut farms. Enjoy a delicious Keralan lunch on board before continuing to the coastal city of Cochin.

Day 14: Cochin (Sun, 21 Feb)

B D

Trade: Why the World Came to Cochin

Am: Take a walking tour of Fort Cochin, visiting the oldest church in India, 500-year old Portuguese houses, the old spice houses and areas that could be lifted from an English country village.

Eve: Enjoy a farewell dinner with the group

Day 15: Cochin (Mon, 22 Feb)

B

Am: If departing transfer to airport OR take the beach extension

All itineraries are subject to change according to local conditions.



The perfect spot for a G&T – the Taj Savoy, Ooty

Hotels

Lemon Tree Ulsoor Hotel (Bangalore)

Sleek and contemporary, this comfortable and friendly hotel is situated in the heart of Bangalore.

Southern Star (Mysore)

Centrally located and built within 4 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens with a pool, this hotel provides comfortable and spacious rooms, contemporary style and excellent customer service.

Taj Savoy (Ooty)

Perched high above six acres of landscaped gardens, the lovely Savoy Hotel offers colonial style cottages that were built between 1834-1865. The service is superb and welcoming, the rooms are extremely comfortable and an aura of peaceful old world charm permeates the property.

GRT Regency (Madurai)

A hotel in the contemporary style with well equipped rooms, a lounge bar and a swimming pool. It enjoys a central location and often attracts comments on the quality of its restaurant.

Elephant Court (Periyar)

A welcoming hotel rambling across spacious grounds, Elephant Court provides spacious and elegant rooms, a lovely pool and an excellent restaurant.

Trident Hotel (Cochin)

This beautiful hotel is one of the best in Cochin, blending classic charm with elegant rooms set amidst a lovely central courtyard and landscaped gardens with a pool.



Mr Abraham in his spice plantation



Marari Beach, Kerala

Extension

Marari Sands Beach Resort *

This charming small beach resort consists of 13 intimate bungalows nestled within lush, palm studded gardens that lead down to a pristine white sand beach. The service is warm and friendly and the restaurant provides freshly cooked delicious local food. Relax in a hammock on the beach or by the pool, or treat yourself to a soothing Ayurvedic treatment in the spa. This low-key resort is quiet and relaxed and the

Day 15: Cochin / Marari Sands (Mon, 22 Feb)

B

Am: Check out and transfer to Marari Sands Beach Resort

Pm: Arrive and at leisure

Day 16: Marari Sands (Tues, 23 Feb)

B

Am: At leisure at the resort

Day 17: Marari Sands (Wed, 24 Feb)

B

Am: Check out and transfer to the airport

**The cost of the tour is
USD \$4,043 per person sharing
(excluding international
flights and transfers)**

The cost includes:

- 14 nights' accommodation in twin-bedded rooms within medium grade, heritage and boutique hotels

The single room supplement is USD \$969

- Specialist UK tour leader (Carolyn Fry)
- Comprehensive briefing notes
- Breakfast and lunch or dinner daily (one day with lunch and dinner)
- Two train trips and all transport as per the itinerary
- A full programme of cultural visits
- Admission fees where applicable
- National guide throughout ('Prince' Charles)
- Tips

The cost excludes:

- International flights (please contact us if you would like help booking these)
- Airport transfers
- Indian visa and travel insurance
- All personal extras such as portorage, laundry, inoculation fees and drinks
- All optional excursions, tours and visits

Kerala Extension Cost:

Two nights at **Marari Sands Beach Resort in Kerala** costs **USD \$347** per person sharing. Includes daily breakfast and arrival and departure airport transfers.

Single supplement: **USD \$193**

Please contact the office for more information.

* **Marari Sands Beach Resort is dry, but guests may bring their own alcohol to enjoy in their rooms. Alcohol can be bought at outlets near the resort.**

About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.

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Mysore Palace (top); Spice seller in Mysore;
On the road in Periyar; Commuting Kerala style (above)



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tours

