



Like Water for Spices

A UNITARIAN JOURNEY TO SOUTH INDIA: March 11 – 27, 2011

From the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea



Sitting quietly amid temples, spices, & backwaters. . .

South India is a plethora of colour, many different cultural groups, and breathtaking temples and landscapes that will open the senses of your soul. You will visit the pagodas and temples of Mahabalipuram, the impressive Meenakshi temple of Madurai, the stunning Rock Fort temple at Trichy, and experience an ashram in Pondicherry. As we travel west to the state of Kerala, the peace and tranquility of the small villages provide a welcome change from the hustle and bustle of the large cities. A special treat is cruising the peaceful backwaters between Kottayam and Alleppey. Dramatic dance techniques and superb bronze sculptures of Shivas, Durgas and Ganeshes that originated in this part of the country add a rich cultural element for us. We end our journey in Kochin on the Arabian Sea. This special tour is sponsored by Neighbourhood UU Congregation in Toronto, Canada. \$295 of the registration fee is a donation to Neighbourhood and you will receive a tax receipt. You will learn, experience, and explore, and might even have a life-changing spiritual awakening that India is famous for!

SIGNATURE MOMENTS:

- Catching the first rays of the rising sun at the Shore Temple in Mahabalipuram
- Meditating in Pondicherry
- Learning about the unique Tanjore painting in Trichy
- Exploring the Brihadeshvara Temple in Tanjore, a World Heritage Site
- Joining local worshippers at the Hall of a Thousand Pillars in Madurai
- Discovering the tropical paradise of Periyar
- Enjoying a delightful cruise through the backwater canals of Kerala
- Admiring the famed Chinese Fishing Nets in Kochi

Following the 17-day trip, consider extending your trip by visiting Goa, Mumbai or other places in India.

THIS TRIP IS LIMITED TO 24 PARTICIPANTS

Start: Chennai (Madras)
Finish: Kochi (Cochin)
TOUR COST PER PERSON: \$4,595 USD
SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: \$1,595 USD
DONATION TO NEIGHBOURHOOD UU CONGREGATION (TAX RECEIPT SUPPLIED): \$295 CAD

Please note: tour cost is based on double occupancy.

DEPOSITS & BALANCE PAYMENTS:

A non-refundable deposit of **\$500 CAD** per person is required to reserve a space on this tour. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:

If you are a single traveler who is willing to share, we can try to match you up with an appropriate roommate. However, if we are unsuccessful, please be advised that the single supplement will apply.

CANCELLATION POLICY:

All deposits are non-refundable.

TOUR COST INCLUDES:

- Accommodation in hotels indicated or similar
- Meals as indicated in itinerary including special welcome dinner
- Airport transfers by private air-conditioned vehicle
- Backwater Cruise from Kottayam to Allepy
- Kathakali Dance presentation
- All domestic transportation by private vehicle
- Excursions as listed with qualified English Speaking guide
- Gratuities
- Full time Worldwide Quest escort accompanying the group

TOUR COST DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- International Airfare
- Airport and departure taxes
- Airport arrival and departure transfers for passengers not travelling on group dates
- Items of a personal nature ie. laundry, bottled water, soft drinks, phone calls, etc.
- Travel insurance
- Visa
- Additional transport required due to any emergency situation



TOUR LEADERS:

Rev. Wayne Walder

Rev. Wayne Walder is the minister of the Neighbourhood Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Wayne has led retreats and pilgrimages in some of the most wonderful places in the world. He has loved religion and spirituality since he was a child. After helping to build the Neighbourhood congregation, he realized there wasn't a liberal and respectful practice of going deeper into culture and religion. So he teamed up with Beverly Carr to create retreats and pilgrimages to exotic places. He has a Master Degree in religion from the U of Toronto, loves religious anthropology, and will often play the native American flute in caves and in the echoing buildings of every faith.

He has met and worked with many spiritual teachers, including Pir Vilayat, Carlos Nakai, Yogi Bahjan, Swami Rama, David McBride, Thomas Moore, Fool's Crow, the Dalai Lama, Sharon Saltzberg, and Walter Bruggeman. Wayne teaches meditation with a combination of humor, reason, and respect for religious traditions. He understands meditation is only a tool, useful to help us become more aware of a personal human life and to develop the courage required to live it with others.

Beverly Carr

A Unitarian for 40 years, she is a founding member of the new Neighbourhood UU Congregation. She promotes overseas volunteer opportunities to those 16 and up, and paid teaching opportunities for university graduates. In 1996, Beverly began organizing trips for Unitarians. They travelled to England, Hungary, Czech Republic, Spain, and France and met Unitarians in those countries. India, Santa Fe, Peru, Turkey, and Belize had a bit of a different focus, but the dynamics of taking a journey with "fellow travelers" adds a special something to the experience. Beverly found that UUs are typically go-with-the-flow and relaxed travellers — they like surprises, and are lots of fun to travel with. She'd be happy to talk to you about this trip that promises to be a delightful one, with not only good company, but with magical moments, visual treats and much to discover about India and ourselves.



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO BOOK THIS TOUR:

Please contact **Kerry Tattrie** at the **Worldwide Quest** office:
1.800.387.1483 or email at: **kerry@worldwidequest.com**.

For books to read and other links, please see: **www.nuuc.ca**.

For additional information about Worldwide Quest's terms and conditions, please refer to the current Cultural Explorations brochure or visit: www.worldwidequest.com/terms.php.

All participants on tours operated by Worldwide Quest are covered by the terms of the Ontario Travel Industry Act (Worldwide Quest International, Ontario - License # 2667946).

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ITINERARY IN DETAIL:



Day 1 / Friday, March 11: Arrive in Chennai (Madras)

Flights from Toronto will arrive in the late night of March 10 / very early morning of March 11. On arrival in Chennai we drive directly to Mahabalipuram and our delightful beach resort. This is the ideal place to rest up from our long flight. We'll meet later in the day for lunch together and an introduction to our trip. This evening (*schedule permitting*) we will enjoy an evening of classical dance.

Overnight: Temple Bay Resort, Mahabalipuram

Meals: Lunch



Day 2 / Saturday, March 12: Mahabalipuram

Today we will visit the magnificent temples of Mahabalipuram, the city of seven pagodas. We'll visit the Shore Temple, designed to catch the first rays of the rising sun and to illuminate the waters after dark. We'll visit the mandapas, pillared halls carved into the rock face bearing witness to the artistry of the Pallavan (600s CE) rock cutters.

We'll also see the eight rathas, monolithic temples fashioned as chariots which remain an architectural mystery, for each is apparently a faithful reproduction of a structure built of wood with even the grain of the timber beams and rafters has been simulated in stone.

Overnight: Temple Bay Resort, Mahabalipuram

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 3 / Sunday, March 13: Chennai

Today we will travel into Chennai to attend services at the Unitarian Christian Church of Madras. In the afternoon we will explore some of the highlights of India's fourth largest city. We'll visit San Thomas Cathedral, founded by St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus, who came to India to spread Christianity in A.D.52, and the 9th century Hindu Mylapore Temple.

Overnight: Temple Bay Resort, Mahabalipuram

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 4 / Monday, March 14: Pondicherry

The seaside colony of Pondicherry has an ancient history dating back to the first — sixth centuries BCE. It was the French, who purchased the town in the late 17th century, only relinquishing their hold in 1954, who left the most enduring legacy. A French élan can still be felt, tempered by South Indian warmth.

It is here that Sri Aurobindo, a politically active British-educated Bengali seeking asylum from the British, took to meditation and yoga while developing theories of enlightenment that integrated his personal spirituality with the tenets of modern science. We'll visit the ashram to learn more about this spiritual quest.

Overnight: Pondicherry

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 5 / Tuesday, March 15: Pondicherry

We'll spend the morning at the ashram, meditating at the memorial chambers (samadhis) of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, his spiritual soul mate, which lie in the center of the peaceful main courtyard. It's a very humble place, not like the huge or ancient temples typical of Tamil. Within the house (where the couple once lived) you will find the wise elders of the ashram, who are available for questions.



This afternoon, choose to return to the ashram or spend time on your own enjoying the town.

Overnight: Pondicherry

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 6 / Wednesday, March 16: Trichy

Today we will drive to Trichy. The “City of the Three-Headed Demon” sprawls at the foot of colossal Rock Fort that was built in the 10th century. The town is famous for the art of the unique Tanjore painting — rich vibrant colors, dashes of gold, semi-precious stones, glass, pearls. We will learn more about this technique during our stay here.

During the bitter Carnatic wars in the mid-1700s, French and British forces battled for control of the city, both keen to establish control of the looming hilltop fortress. Today a number of neo-Gothic Christian monuments remain as evidence of the British influence during the 18th and 19th centuries, when military quarters were established here and when the present-day city was built.

Overnight: Hotel Sangam, Trichy

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 7 / Thursday, March 17: Trichy

Our day begins with a visit to Trichy’s Rock Fort which dominates the city. Next we’ll visit the vibrant, ancient holy town of Srirangam. One of India’s biggest temple complexes is the site of sprawling Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, whose seven concentric boundary walls (prakarams) enclose 240 hectares (600 acres) devoted to the Hindu faith. There are

temples here as well as the Thousand Pillared Hall. Also within the walls of the complex, is a web of lanes lined with houses, shops, and businesses, which retains the feel of a medieval village. A climb up to the rooftop of the complex is rewarded with a memorable view over the entire complex.

Overnight: Hotel Sangam, Trichy

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 8 / Friday, March 18: Excursion to Tanjore

The Brihadeshvara Temple is a World Heritage Site. It is one of the finest works of the Cholan Empire built completely with granite in the 11th and 12th centuries. The temple complex is vast with a main shrine housing Lord Shiva in the Lingam form and subsidiary temples and mandapams all around. The Temple is still very much alive, with devotees lining up in the hundreds to pay their respects and poojas performed daily. The monumental tower or vimana over the inner sanctum rises almost 70m (230 ft.) and is visible for miles around.

We’ll also visit the 16th-century Royal Palace. It has fallen into a state of minor ruin but is home to the impressive Rajaraja Museum and Art Gallery which houses an eclectic collection of stone and bronze idols, mostly from the Chola period. We’ll return to the temple at sunset to be blessed and soak up the atmosphere during the evening pooja. We return to Trichy in the evening.

Overnight: Hotel Sangam, Trichy

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch





Day 9 / Saturday, March 19: Drive to Madurai

This morning, we continue by road to the temple town of Madurai. The town is said to be named for the nectar that flowed from Shiva's hair as a blessing for the new city (madhuram is the Tamil word for sweetness). This is the oldest living city in the Indian peninsula. It was the capital of a kingdom that ruled much of South India during the 4th century B.C., and that conducted trade as far afield as Greece and Rome. The city is famed as a centre for the Tamil Sangams, great festivals of poetry and writing that were being held more than two thousand years ago.

As we approach the city we'll stop to visit the Temple of Thirupparankundram, which is one of the six abodes of Lord Muruga and is considered a sacred place for marriages. The temple is one of a group of cave shrines. The innermost shrine is carved from a single rock.

Overnight: Hotel GRT, Madurai

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 10 / Sunday, March 20: Madurai

We'll start the day with a visit to one of South India's biggest, busiest pilgrimage sites, attracting up to 15,000 devotees a day, the Meenakshi Temple. It is a place of intense spiritual activity and always undergoing renovation and repairs. We'll spend time here admiring fine examples of Dravidian temple architecture and joining worshippers thronging the Hall of a Thousand Pillars to offer prayers to the many deities. All around the complex of shrines and effigies, various pujas (prayers) and rituals are conducted, some under the guiding hand of a Brahmin priest, others

as spontaneous expressions of personal, elated devotion. Layer upon layer of ghee and oil have turned surfaces of many of the statues smooth and black, with daubs of turmeric and vermilion powder sprinkled on by believers seeking blessings and hope.

In the afternoon we'll visit the Tirumala Nayak Palace built in 1636 by King Thirumalai Nayak with the help of an Italian Architect. The building we see today was the main Palace where the King lived. In the two parts of the palace there are royal residence, a theatre, shrine, apartments, armoury, palanquin place, royal bandstand, quarters, pond and garden. After dinner, we'll return to the Meenakshi Temple to witness the closing ceremony.

Overnight: Hotel GRT, Madurai

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 11 / Monday, March 21: Drive to Periyar

This morning we drive to Periyar where we'll spend three nights in a green, tropical paradise. As we make our way to our lovely hotel, we'll stop to visit the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, located in the Cook hills, an area of winding roads, tea plantations, rubber estates and pepper and coffee gardens. The Periyar National Park is a mix of tropical evergreen and semi-evergreen forest, which supports a wide variety of plant and animal species including large herds of wild elephants.

Overnight: Spice Village, Periyar

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 12 / Tuesday, March 22: Periyar

Our accommodation for the three nights in Periyar is an earth resort; a village produced using mountain spirit and tribal wisdom. It's a beautiful spot for relaxation and contemplation. This morning we'll explore the nearby area, visiting a tea plantation, a spice market and local villages. We'll also enjoy a cooking demonstration with our chef — it's an opportunity to learn techniques of southern Indian cuisine.

Overnight: Spice Village, Periyar

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 13 / Wednesday, March 23: Periyar

Spend the day at leisure enjoying your surroundings. Ayurvedic treatments are available here or enjoy a trek through the pepper plantations.

Overnight: *Spice Village, Periyar*

Meals: *Breakfast, Dinner*

Day 14 / Thursday, March 24: Kumarakom

Today we drive to Kumarakom, a cluster of little islands in the heart of the Kerala backwaters. En route we'll stop in the village of Kottayam, the bustling town described by Arundhati Roy in her Booker Prize-winning *The God of Small Things*. Kumarakom captures the essence of Kerala in a unique and lovely setting. We'll spend two nights here enjoying this tranquil paradise which sustains a delightfully laid-back way of life that has endured for centuries. The afternoon is yours to slip into the feeling.

Overnight: *Abad Whispering Palms, Kumarakom*

Meals: *Breakfast, Dinner*



Day 15 / Friday, March 25: Kumarakom

Kerala is known for its panoramic backwaters and lush paddy fields. The backwaters are a chain of brackish lagoons and lakes lying parallel to the Malabar Coast. The network includes five large lakes linked by 1500 kilometres of canals, fed by 38 rivers and extending virtually half the length of Kerala. The backwaters were formed by the action of waves and shore currents creating low barrier islands across the mouths of the many rivers flowing down from the Western Ghats. We will take a delightful backwater cruise along a network of canals, lined with village homes and coconut

trees, to get a different perspective on the lifestyles of the local people.

Overnight: *Abad Whispering Palms, Kumarakom*

Meals: *Breakfast, Dinner*

Day 16 / Saturday, March 26: Kochi

This morning we drive to Kochi, formerly known as Cochin, on the Arabian Sea. We'll explore the town this afternoon and get a taste for its three distinct areas. There are hundreds of shops and warehouses that line the main road of Mattancherry and Jew Town, alternately permeated with the scent of ginger, pepper and chili. The merchants continue business as they likely have for centuries, trading in the riches of Kerala's agriculture.

Fort Kochi, the oldest European settlement in India, retains an old world charm with heritage buildings in a combination of Portuguese, Dutch, Jewish, British, and local influences evident in the tiled, steep-roofed bungalows that line its quaint streets. On the opposite side of the two peninsular arms that shield Kochi harbour, lies modern Ernakulam. This evening we'll enjoy a cruise in the harbour.

Overnight: *Hotel Malabar, Kochi*

Meals: *Breakfast, Dinner*

Day 17 / Sunday, March 27: Kochi

This morning we'll take a look at the famed Chinese Fishing Nets. Said to have been introduced by traders from the court of Kublai Khan, these cantilevered nets, set up on teak and bamboo poles, are physical remnants of Fort Kochi's ancient trade with the Far East. Fishermen work the nets all day long, lowering them into the water and then hauling them up using a remarkably efficient pulley system. Kochi is home to the oldest synagogue in the Commonwealth. We'll visit the Paradesi Synagogue to view the Great Scrolls of the Old Testament, the copper plates in which the grants of privilege made by the Kochi rulers were recorded. The exquisite Chinese hand-painted ceramic floor tiles are particularly lovely. After lunch, we transfer to the airport for our homeward bound flights. Or consider extending your trip by visiting Mumbai, Goa or other places in India. *(Please call Worldwide Quest for more information.)*

Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch*

Itinerary and accommodations subject to change.

