

Textiles Tour of Southern India, India *New*

Travel with textiles artist Sue Lawty, from the Indian Ocean to the Arabian Sea, to discover southern India's vibrant textile traditions and rich cultural heritage.



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Tour
Accommodation	Hotels, Riceboat
Grade	Tour
Duration	20 days from London to London
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Sue Lawty
Land only	Joining in Chennai, India Departing Kochi (Cochin), India

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Departures

Group departures

2027 Dates:

Sun 10 Jan - Fri 29 Jan

Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 4 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

Your guide



Sue Lawty

Sue is one of Britain's finest artists. Alongside other mediums, Sue has worked with textiles all her life and has exhibited extensively across the world. She is a tutor and visiting lecturer and has travelled on 'weaving journeys' to Bhutan, Morocco, America, Australia, India, Nepal and Poland. Sue held a year long Residency at the V&A in London and has been awarded prestigious Artist Research Fellowships at both the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington DC and the Faculty of the Environment, University of Leeds. She was recently invited to take up a significant three month international artist residency in Stockholm.

Sue is an accomplished fell runner and mountain trekker and has led many successful trips for Mountain Kingdoms since she led our first Weavers' Trail in Bhutan in 1995, later also leading treks to Dolpo and Zaskar. More recently, in 2019, she returned to Bhutan to lead our specialist Weavers' Trail walking holiday and in 2022 and 2023 led the first departures of our other Indian textile tour: Colours of India - Gujarat.



Local Leader

Sue will be accompanied by a local guide throughout who will manage the logistics for the group and help ensure the smooth running of your holiday. There will also be specialist experts and guides at the workshops and other textile-related activities and tours.

Pictured here is one of our Southern Indian tour leaders, Denny Ouseph. Denny has over 25 years experience in the tourism industry, escorting numerous groups and individuals across the diverse cultural and scenic landscapes of South India. He has a particular passion for photography and bird watching, and is dedicated to delivering exceptional experiences to his guests.

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-2	Fly to Chennai. Transfer to Pondicherry. Rickshaw city tour.
Days 3-4	Natural dyeing workshop and tour of Auroville community. Full day eco-printing workshop at a family farm.
Day 5	Drive to Chennai. Visit Mahabalipuram World Heritage Site and DakshinaChitra Museum en route. Time at leisure.
Day 6	All day Kalamkari workshop at Kalakshetra Foundation.
Day 7	Transfer by train to Mysuru (Mysore). Visit palace and market.
Day 8	Visit silk weaving village. City tour of Mysuru and visit to embroidery area.
Days 9-10	Drive to Wayanad. Gentle walk in plantation. Bamboo workshop at Uravu and tea factory visit.
Days 11-12	Drive to Kannur. Visit local villages, handloom weavers and co-operatives.
Days 13-15	Train to Alleppey. Two-night riceboat cruise. Drive to Munnar and visit a tea estate.
Days 16-17	Full day workshop in natural dyeing techniques at Srishti. Drive to Chendamangalam. At leisure.
Day 18	Morning tour of Fort Cochin and Mattencherry. Afternoon Kathakali dance performance.
Day 19	Sightseeing and visit local craft and textile centres at Chendamangalam. Leisure time at Cherai Beach.
Day 20	Fly to UK from Kochi (Cochin).

Your trip highlights

- Travel in the company of esteemed textile artist Sue Lawty through Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, on a creatively immersive tour
- Journey from east to west meeting the most skilled weavers, embroiderers, dyers and other artisan workers
- Participate in hands-on workshops in dyeing and block printing in supportive environments
- Spend time with families in their workshops where you will be introduced to the rich traditions of their craft
- Relax into the slow pace of life of the Keralan backwaters on a two-day riceboat cruise
- Visit ancient sites and colonial-era towns steeped in history, and discover the beautiful terraced landscapes of the Western Ghats
- Stroll through bustling bazaars and along the palm-fringed beaches of the Arabian Coast
- Spend nights in comfy, characterful hotels with all meals included

Trip summary

Between the Indian Ocean in the east and the Arabian Sea in the west, this diverse and stimulating tour has been designed to introduce you to many of the splendid textile and cultural delights that mark Southern India, whilst also allowing time to step back and soak in the atmosphere of each place.

Extended visits to makers and artisans bring you up close to their work and directly into their lives, giving opportunity for meaningful interactions, insights and understanding. Carefully designed workshops and hands-on experiences offer time for practical learning and experimentation, imbuing a little of the magic of these wonderful people into your own life.

Be it dyes from plants and minerals, or threads from crops or native trees, much of the region's textile creativity has its genesis firmly rooted in the natural landscape and ancient traditions of a specific local area. Yet as you travel through these lands, it becomes clear how, over millennia, war, trade, and successive colonial powers have delivered a melee of cultural influences that have impacted architecture and shaped many aspects of society. It will be a layered, stimulating and compelling journey.

Accommodation will be in mid-range hotels and characterful heritage properties wherever possible, including the beautiful Cranganor Riverside Chateau - a delightful estate on the Periyar river in Kerala. Another highlight will be a two-day cruise on the tranquil backwaters of Kerala, renowned as a paradise for bird and nature lovers. Here you will live in style on a private, handcrafted rice boat complete with chef and pilot, leaving you free to relish the joy and simplicity of village life as you glide serenely by.

Throughout the journey, you will be looked after by our highly experienced tour leader, Sue Lawty, ably assisted by expert local guides. Sue will also bring a wealth of specialist knowledge from her many years as a textile artist and educator.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Fly to Chennai.

Today you depart on your overnight flight to Chennai in southern India.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive Chennai. Transfer to Pondicherry - approximately 3 hours. Tour the city.

You will arrive in the morning at Chennai airport in Tamil Nadu, the southernmost state of India. Here you will be met and transferred to Pondicherry and your hotel for the next three nights.

After settling into your room and enjoying some welcome rest and nourishment, an afternoon rickshaw tour will introduce you to the charming French architecture and Tamil quarters of this heritage town. The French first set foot in Pondicherry (also known as Puducherry) in 1670. Their undisturbed rule ended in 1954 and today significant elements of this colonial Gallic past rub shoulders with the indigenous Tamil culture. In addition to the diverse local markets, you may likely visit the famous Sri Aurobindo Ashram, a notable spiritual centre in the city. If time permits, you will go to Atelier Shanti, a rehabilitation centre, where women engage in various textile related activities including dying yarn, weaving, embroidery etc. They also produce high quality cotton material at very reasonable prices.

An evening stroll along the promenade, taking in the joyful atmosphere of families and friends savouring this seafront location, which overlooks the Bay of Bengal in the Indian Ocean, is a perfect end to your first day in southern India.

Overnight: Villa Shanti or Similar, Pondicherry (Meals: L D)

Day 3: Morning visit to Colours of Nature in Auroville, with workshop. Afternoon tour of Auroville.

Today you will travel just a few kilometres north of Pondicherry to Auroville.

Built on the principles of collective community, Auroville came into being in 1968 as a place for alternate living where people could reside in harmony, preserving nature and culture. It is currently home to around sixty nationalities from around the world. The Matrimandir, a large golden dome (its inner chamber designed solely for silent meditation), and the informative visitor centre serve as the central focus. From here the settlement is spread out and dotted with environmentally friendly, small and medium-scale enterprises, which focus on Auroville's efforts towards a self-supporting township.



The morning will be spent at an inspiring textile unit called Colours of Nature, where it is intended you take part in a workshop. Founded in 1993, Colours of Nature produces 100% eco-friendly natural dyed textiles and has offered a sustainable livelihood to generations since then. The centre employs a range of plants including pomegranate, marigold flower, sappan wood, madder and even upcycled jackfruit tree sawdust, but their main specialism is the ancient natural indigo dyeing fermentation technique. The numerous 'living' dye vats are testament to this ongoing commitment.

In preparation for the practical session, you will be introduced to the spectrum of dyes and processes involved in the project's cloth and clothing production, followed by the provision of the specific fabric and raw materials required for your workshop. Here you will have an opportunity to stitch shibori designs and prepare samples for tie dyeing and clamping prior to dyeing in the indigo vats.

Auroville has multiple crafts and small industries that use mainly organic materials and follow ecofriendly, responsible practices; later in the day you will visit a mix of these units with a knowledgeable Aurovillian guide who will show you how the community works.

Overnight: Villa Shanti or Similar, Pondicherry (Meals: BLD)

Day 4: Ashokavannam rural working farm with eco-printing workshop.

Today you will travel in a little under an hour north-west from Pondicherry, through rural landscape to an organic family farm where you will be welcomed and immersed in a hands-on experience creating your own natural eco-prints onto fabric.

Ashokavannam is run by mother-daughter duo Shobana Vaidyanathan and Champa Lakshmi and the day will start with a brief tour of their 100 year old ancestral house and kitchen garden before learning the processes involved in crafting your own botanical prints on fabric using leaves and flowers gathered from the lush garden and surrounding village.



In the workshop you will learn how to create and build up your own sample prints, gaining insights into how various fabrics and dyes interact with different types of vegetation and how to modify the resulting colours. The bundled fabrics will be then left to cook in the dye-pot while you relax and enjoy a home-made Tamil lunch freshly prepared following traditional ancestral recipes.

After lunch everyone will have the anticipation of opening their own bundle to reveal the prints and fix them onto the fabric. The day's events at the farm will end with a communal discussion and photo session before you collect your printed pieces. Raw materials and products will be available for purchase should you wish to continue developing the learned techniques back home! Later you return to your hotel and the final evening in Pondicherry.

Overnight: Villa Shanti or Similar, Pondicherry (Meals: BLD)

Day 5: Drive to Chennai - 3-4 hours, visiting Mahabalipuram and DakshinaChitra en route. Rest of day at leisure.

Today you head back north along the Coromandel Coast to Chennai, stopping en route firstly to explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Mahabalipuram, and secondly to visit DakshinaChitra, a living-history museum that showcases the heritage and culture of India's southern states.

The group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram occupies a distinct position in classical Indian architecture. Once a celebrated port city of the Pallava dynasty, which ruled this area between 6th and 9th centuries CE, these majestic examples of temple architecture (some of the oldest in India) were mostly carved out of the natural rock landscape. Founded by the Pallava kings, the collection of sanctuaries comprise rock-cut cave temples known as mandapas, and the vast open-air bas-relief sculptures such as the famous 'Descent of the Ganges' - all testament to the astonishing craftsmanship in the region.

The thousands of sculptures dedicated to the glory of Shiva, which are found in the temple of Rivage, are excellent examples of Pallava art. It is believed by some that this area may conceivably have served as a school for young sculptors. The various sculptures, some unfinished, could have been examples of different architectural styles, possibly demonstrated by instructors and practised by young students. This can be seen in the Pancha Rathas (monolithic temples in the form of chariots) where each of the five Ratha is carved out of a single granite rock formation and sculpted in a different style.

Just twenty-five km south of central Chennai, DakshinaChitra Heritage Museum opened to the public in 1996. DakshinChitra literally means 'a picture of the south'. To showcase the rich cultural heritage of South India through the architecture, art, lifestyles, craft and performing arts, it is a collection of eighteen authentic historical houses, which were acquired separately from the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh after their owners had given them up for demolition. The original homes, in regional vernacular style, were purchased, taken down, transported and reconstructed at DakshinaChitra by artisans of the regions from where the houses came. Contextual exhibitions in each house round out the experience.

Chennai, also known as Madras, is the capital and largest city of Tamil Nadu. Upon arrival, you will check-in to your hotel for the two-night stay. The remaining part of the day will be at leisure, an opportunity to possibly take stock of the experiences so far and look forward to those to come.

Overnight: G R T Grand or Similar, Chennai (Meals: BLD)

Day 6: Visit Kalakshetra Foundation. Kalamkari Workshop.

Today will be spent soaking up the atmosphere at the Kalakshetra Foundation, where a kalamkari block printing workshop has been arranged.

Spread over almost 100 acres by the seashore in Chennai, the Kalakshetra Foundation is a centre for artistic endeavour; for the study and performance of fine arts, envisioned and designed with the style and proportion of Indian aesthetics. Founded in 1936 by Rukmini Devi Arundale, the organisation is testimony to her vision of creating 'a space where the essence of Indian thought would find expression through artistic education'.



Kalamkari is an ancient textile art form that is thought to have evolved around 3000 years ago in the state of Andhra Pradesh. There are two main methodologies of Kalamkari: hand painted and block printed. You will be participating in the latter, the Masulipatinam tradition, where the outlines and main components of a design are printed using hand-carved wooden blocks. The colours used are all natural, extracted from roots, leaves and flowers. These are combined with minerals such as iron and mordants like alum to achieve clarity and fix the hues into the cotton fabric. Traditional patterns frequently utilise motifs from the natural world such as intricate leaf and flower designs and elaborate birds, often entwined into a tree of life design. You will be expertly schooled through the numerous stages of this fascinating craft to produce your own composition.

On returning to your hotel, enjoy a relaxed evening before a very early start tomorrow morning.

Overnight: GRT Grand or Similar, Chennai (Meals: BLD)

Day 7: Train to Mysuru (Mysore). Afternoon - visit city palace and Devaraja fruit & vegetable market.

Today you will embark on the next leg of your tour, heading westwards via Bangalore to Mysuru. You will be transferred to Chennai railway station to board the Vande Bharati Express at 05:50 A fast, comfortable train, mainly for tourists and with only a couple of stops, it arrives in Mysuru at 12:20. Here you will be met and transferred to your hotel for the next two nights.

Mysuru, situated in the foothills of the Chamundi Hills, lies at an altitude of 770m/2,530 ft southwest of Bangalore in the state of Karnataka. Celebrated for its impressive, majestic heritage, it is a captivating municipality often called the 'City of Palaces'. Indeed, in the afternoon you are scheduled to visit the most grand and famous, Mysore Palace, once the official royal residence of the Wadiyar dynasty who were known to be patrons of art and culture. Surrounded by a large garden, the architectural design of the palace is Indo-Saracenic and blends together Hindu, Muslim, Rajput and Gothic styles of architecture.

Alongside this architectural opulence, you will also have opportunity to immerse yourself in the less ostentatious, but completely atmospheric, bustling lanes of the historic Devaraja Market. A feast for the eyes, the market is renowned for vibrant flower, fruit, vegetable and spice stalls piled high with texture and colour. Wafts of exotic incense and the aroma of local foods and delicacies will draw you in to further explore the surrounding streets and traditional delights of this fascinating bazaar district.

Overnight: Royal Orchid Metropole Hotel, Mysore (Meals: BLD)

Day 8: Morning - visit to silk processing village. Afternoon - further explore Mysuru region and the traditional embroidery area of the city.

This morning you will be immersed in the study of silk. From the days of the Maharajas, Mysuru has been famous for its silk industry. Driving approximately one hour out of the city to where sericulture is still practiced using traditional methods, you will have the opportunity to see and learn about the whole process of silk production from unravelling of the silk thread from the cocoons through to the weaving of the illustrious and lustrous fabric.

This afternoon you will head approximately 15km north of Mysuru to Srirangapatna on the Kaveri river. Famous places here include the Tipu Sultan Summer Palace and Sri Ranganthaswamy temple, a significant and grand Hindu shrine which is dedicated to Ranganatha, a manifestation of Lord Vishnu.

Just a few kilometres west along the river is the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary where over 170 different species of birds have been recorded. Here you may see Painted Storks, Kingfishers, Spot-billed Pelicans, Herons, Indian Rollers and more.

Back in Mysuru, if time permits, a visit to the hand embroiderers of the city will be planned. Known locally as Kasuti, this traditional form of folk embroidery is particularly fine and delicate and stitched with no 'wrong' side so both sides of the cloth look alike. Defined by thousands of stitches meticulously detailing a variety of intricate patterns and often featuring nature-inspired designs, it was once one of the 64 essential arts the women courtiers of the 17th century Mysore Kingdom were expected to master. Passed through the generations, this painstaking craft is still very much alive today.

Overnight: Royal Orchid Metropole Hotel, Mysore (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: Drive to Wayanad - 5 hours. Afternoon walk in the spice and coffee plantation.

Today your tour continues south-westwards as you drive through the undulating landscapes of Karnataka and then Kerala to reach the district of Wayanad, set high in the Western Ghats.

Another region of ancient history, evidenced by 6000-year-old rock engravings, it is understood that human settlements have been here since the neolithic age. Several indigenous tribes, each with distinct cultural identity and dialect have, for centuries, inhabited the region.

Situated in the southern part of the Deccan Plateau, Wayanad is a scenic and verdant destination of lush forests, mist covered mountains, sparkling lakes and plantations including coffee, tea, pepper, and cardamom.

You stay for two nights at After the Rains Rainforest Lodge, a simple property set in a sixteen-acre contoured spice garden with striking views of the valley and forests of Nilambur. It is a great place to experience life on a working spice and coffee plantation. In the afternoon enjoy a walk in the plantation where you can see how the various crops are grown, harvested and processed. As Wayanad district is bordered by a protected network of different biological reserves, it is also a noted place for birding.

Overnight: After The Rains Rainforest Lodge (Meals: BLD)

Day 10: Visit Uravu for a Bamboo Workshop. Later visit tea plantation and factory.

This morning, a short drive north takes you to Thrikkaipetta village to visit Uravu, a pioneering not for profit organisation committed to empowering local tribes through sustainable bamboo practices. Established in 1996, it is a hub for bamboo crafts design and production.

We take a guided tour to understand more about the way this organisation works. Bamboo requires little maintenance so is an ideal plant to cultivate in the village, providing raw materials for the local artisans. You will learn about the range of species grown and spend time in the nursery and lush plantations to see propagation and harvesting techniques, later visiting the processing facilities to observe how the raw bamboo is crafted and shaped into various practical handcrafted artefacts.



Additionally, a workshop will be organised where you will be given a hands-on experience of the techniques of making a traditional basket or mat. Surrounded by mountains, the village is a charming place to walk through. There will also be opportunity to peruse the interesting and comprehensive shop!

After returning to your hotel, for those interested, a visit to the local village or tea factory can be arranged. Or you may wish simply to relax and take in the atmosphere of this very green and terraced realm.

Overnight: After The Rains Rainforest Lodge (Meals: BLD)

Day 11: Drive to Kannur in Kerala - 115km approximately, 2½ hours. Visit cotton handloom weavers.

Today a morning drive down the western ghats to the tropical climate and village of Melur in Kannur completes your journey across Southern India. On arrival check into the Heritage 1866, a lovingly restored heritage mansion, for your two-night stay. It is a great place to explore a real Kerala village, away from the tourist circuits.

The Malayalee people are a significant ethnic group native to this state and Malayalam is the majority language here. It is thought that the name Kerala derives from the Malayalam word kera 'coconut tree' and alam 'land; hence, 'land of the coconuts'. They are certainly in abundance!



Dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries, weaver families from Tamil Nadu settled in Kannur, producing exquisite woven fabrics for temples and royals. Still culturally rich, Kannur, now often hailed as the 'Land of Looms', is well known for this heritage of quality cotton handloom weaving. The skill, excellence of design and dedication of the local artisans not only produces superb textiles but also results in social and economic stability for the rural communities. It particularly empowers the women (many of whom are the weavers) as they achieve financial independence and can showcase their individual creativity. Over the next couple of days you will have time to visit some of these weaving workshops, watch the methods and techniques of dyeing, warping and weaving, and appreciate the expertise as the weavers translate their complex designs into vibrantly coloured cloth. It will be possible to buy some of these hand loomed cotton fabrics.

There will also be opportunity to unwind, consider a swim in the Arabian sea or take a leisurely stroll along the unspoilt shores of this part of the coast.

Overnight: The Heritage 1866 or Similar, Thalassery (Meals: BLD)

Day 12: Visit the Textile Museum. Cooking demonstration with lunch. Local temple/ possible Theyyam ritual.

A visit to the local Textile Museum brings context to the weaving you have already seen. You will have time to explore the exhibits and soak in the information. But you won't be tested afterwards!

Later you will partake in a home cooking demonstration of the delectable Malabar cuisine and discover how to combine the distinctive mix of spices to cook authentic food which will delight the senses and tastebuds. This will be followed by a tasty lunch and chance to discuss the techniques and ingredients involved.

North Kerala is renowned for Theyyam, an ancient traditional ritual dance of the Malabar region, where local communities honour deities through elaborate performances. Colourful costumes, complex makeup and mesmerising dances serve to re-enact mythical stories and summon spiritual attachments. As this is a ritual, the local shrines do not publish dates in advance, so it isn't certain we would have the opportunity to witness one of these astonishing performances. However it is hoped that during a visit to a local temple a Theyyam will be encountered.

We may head to the beach in the evening to watch through the coconut trees as the sun dips into the ocean.

Overnight: The Heritage 1866 or Similar, Thalassery (Meals: BLD)

Day 13: Morning train to Alleppey (07:57 - 12:38). Board private riceboat for two-day cruise.

Transfer to Kannur Railway Station to again experience an Indian rail journey, this time on the Vande Bharat express heading south down the coast to Alleppey.

On arrival you will be met and transferred to the Puthenangadi jetty where you board your rice boat for a relaxing two day cruise on the palm fringed backwaters of Alleppey and Kuttanad. These boats were once used to transport rice from the interiors of the backwaters to the market towns on the coast. With the advent of road networks, deep into the backwaters, the boats have been significantly refurbished by local craftsmen and now take visitors in comparative luxury. We usually use 2 or 3 bedroom houseboats; these will be for the sole use of our group.

Setting off on the cruise you will be shown to your private ensuite room, yours for the next two nights. As you wind down and settle into the slower way of life on the water, a delicious home cooked lunch prepared by the houseboat's resident chef will be served. Meals centre around freshly caught fish and local vegetables/ rice/ coconut from neighbouring farmers. Vegetarian preferences can readily be catered for with equal care.

You are now primed for two days of total relaxation in spectacular surroundings as you are transported into another world.

Overnight: Riceboat (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: Riceboat cruise.

Enjoying a riceboat trip whilst in Kerala is a very special experience. Taking two days allows time to explore the innumerable waterways and quieter areas well off the beaten track.

From the delightful living spaces on board, take in scenes of the waterside villages and local families going about their day, floating supermarkets and fisherfolk selling their catch, and the joy of children playing hide and seek among the coconut palms, which abound. We may well see some of the varied products from this palm such as coconut mats, brushes, or threads and ropes being made.



Perhaps you will try some Toddy; a 'palm wine' naturally produced from the sap taken from the cut flower of the tree. Initially, the collected white liquid is non-alcoholic and tends to be quite sweet, but the sap begins fermenting immediately due to natural yeasts meeting with the air. Within two hours, fermentation yields an aromatic wine of up to 4% alcohol content, mildly intoxicating and sweet.

On both days you will have the opportunity to take an even quieter excursion on a small canoe through some of the narrower backwaters, allowing you to glide by small, centuries old dwellings and landscapes in total peace and harmony. For bird enthusiasts there are myriads of species to see including fish eagles, herons, kingfishers, cormorants and bee-eaters. It is a bird photographers paradise! Having completely settled into the slower pace of life on the water, enjoy a last evening meal of delicacies specially cooked for you and revel in sweet slumbers.

Overnight: Riceboat (Meals: BLD)

Day 15: Late morning disembark from the boat. Drive to Munnar - 175km, 3 hours. Afternoon visit to a tea estate with a walk.

This morning you leave Alleppey and drive eastwards winding up through the attractive landscape of the western ghats to Munnar, which sits at 1,600m/5,200ft. Here we stay for two nights at a modern hotel, Fragrant Nature, with good views of the surrounding contoured terraces and valley.

Munnar's history traces back to the late 19th century, when British planters began cultivating tea on its misty hills. Over the years the estates have changed hands but still produce some of the best quality tea to be found in South India. This afternoon enjoy a walk in the tea gardens and visit a tea factory to learn more about the production of this ubiquitous drink.

Overnight: Fragrant Nature Munnar or Similar, Munnar (Meals: BLD)

Day 16: Full day visit and workshop at Aranya Naturals, Srishti Trust.

Working with differently abled children and young adults of Munnar, the Srishti Trust focuses on education and empowerment through meaningful training. Srishti translates as 'creation', and by nurturing skills in art and craft, and bonding with the natural world, the intention is to generate creative, sustainable livelihoods for the community. A handmaking paper unit, a natural dyeing unit, a school and a bakery comprise Srishti's centre.

In the natural dye section Aranya Naturals stands out as a pioneering project in natural dyeing. Their commitment to sustainability is evident by exclusively using natural dyes, avoiding all synthetic alternatives.

The full day hands-on workshop includes activities such as preparing natural dyes from locally sourced plants and herbs, dyeing fabrics, and creating unique handcrafted textile products. Indigo resist printing, wax resist block printing and clamp tie dyeing are practised. Today we will learn some of these techniques.

Srishti's on site shop is extensively stocked with beautiful natural dyed collections of silk and cotton fabrics, scarves and clothes. There are also many hand-made paper products from the paper unit, plus a small bakery/deli. Later there may time to explore the delights of Munnar town.

Overnight: Fragrant Nature Munnar or Similar, Munnar (Meals: BLD)

Day 17: Drive to Cranganor Riverside Chateau -120km. Rest of day at leisure.

Embarking on the last leg of our tour, this morning you will head down from the hills and back towards the coast. Our last three nights will be at the beautiful Cranganor Riverside Chateau, a calming haven of tranquillity, located on the banks of the Periyar river.

Historically this area was once the realm of an ancient harbour and urban centre known as Muzuris. Believed to have been one of the most important trading centres in the Indian ocean region, it connected the Malabar Coast with the Roman Empire, Egypt, and the rest of the world through maritime trade. Though lost over time, the site is now one of India's largest heritage conservation projects with archaeologists still excavating and continuing to find more artifacts. It is also thought to be the place where Christianity first came to India, when St Thomas first landed near here; the first church built still exists.

Cranganor Riverside Chateau is a perfect place to unwind and explore this culturally rich part of Kerala and the remainder of the day is yours to enjoy as you wish. The property has the feeling of a retreat with its serene atmosphere, wonderful gardens and idyllic views over the water. You could take time out to relax in a favourite seating area found strategically placed around the grounds; watch the birdlife in the trees and listen to the soothing sounds of nature; luxuriate in the magnificent infinity pool, which appears to seamlessly blend into the river; or perhaps take in a traditional Ayurveda massage with herbs from the garden. More active alternatives include renting a bicycle or a kayak to explore further afield.

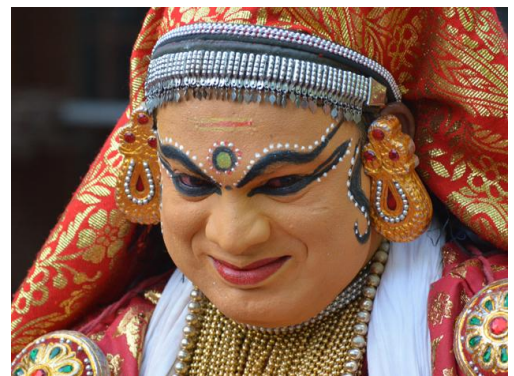
There is also the option take a short drive to the relatively quiet Cherai Beach where you may like to chill out in the Chilli Out Café. As its name implies, the food and drinks served are not spicy and may be welcome at this stage in the trip! Possibly take a dip or stroll along the sands and later enjoy a mocktail as the sun sinks into the Arabian Sea.

Overnight: Cranganor Riverside Chateau (Meals: BLD)

Day 18: Excursion to Fort Kochi and Mattancherry. Afternoon Kathakali dance performance.

Fort Kochi, formerly known as Fort Cochin, is a vibrant port city and the commercial hub of Kerala. Exploring the charmingly atmospheric and historic streets, it soon becomes apparent how the city's colourful past as the centre of India's spice trade has shaped its architecture and identity over the centuries. Merchants from China, Arabia and Europe transformed Kochi into a cosmopolitan melting pot of cultural exchange; and colonial influences of the Dutch, Portuguese and the British are evident in the faded buildings and monuments that line the streets. It is a delight to walk through.

Almost every mention of Fort Kochi will bear an image of the intriguing and sculptural Chinese fishing nets on the waterfront. Believed to have been introduced in the 14th century by Chinese traders, today just a few remain of the many that once characterised the area.



There is much to see in the neighbourhood of Mattancherry in old Kochi, including a visit to the wholesale spice market with sacks piled high - an aromatic and immersive experience. Famous buildings include the Dutch Palace; St Francis church, originally built in 1503 and one of the oldest European churches in India; and the synagogue (completed in 1568) in the quarter known as Jew Town. All these sites are testament to the extensive international heritage of the area.

This afternoon you will witness a Kathakali production - a traditional form of Indian classical dance indigenous to Kerala. With the most vivid costumes and head dresses and elaborate makeup, it can take a skilled Kathakali troupe many hours to prepare themselves. For this performance you will see the dancers preparing for an hour - which is in itself quite fascinating - followed by an hour of dance. As with many religious stories and folk legends across the world, the dance symbolises the eternal fight between good and evil and is a fabulous spectacle.

You will return to Cranganor after the show has finished.

Overnight: Cranganor Riverside Chateau (Meals: BLD)

Day 19: Sightseeing around Chendamangalam. Afternoon at leisure at Cherai Beach.

With the whole day to explore the area, you will visit the palaces of the Paliyam family who were the ministers to the Cochin Maharaja. The palace complex includes a museum displaying rare artefacts, documents, and memorabilia, offering visitors a window into Kerala's feudal and colonial past. One of the most remarkable features of Chendamangalam (the village which lies just across the river from Cranganor) is the close proximity of places of worship from different faiths—a Hindu temple, a Christian church, a Mosque, and a Jewish synagogue. In this village you will also be able to visit the local market.



Chendamangalam has a famous handloom weaving tradition and the traditional muslin sarees are sought after the world over. The units were all but destroyed in the devastating floods of 2018 but have now made a comeback with the support from the community. You will visit a cooperative handloom society to see the making these traditional fabrics.

Afterwards, you will drive to nearby Cherai Beach where you can have lunch and then spend the afternoon relaxing, strolling along the golden sands and perhaps even taking a dip. The beach here is known for its calm waters as well as for the famous Chinese fishing nets which are commonly seen here.

Later you return to Cranganor for a final evening dinner to mark the end of the tour and reflect on the wealth of magnificent experiences.

Overnight: Cranganor Riverside Chateau (Meals: BLD)

Day 20: Group transfer to the airport for international flight.

Transfer to Cochin airport in the morning for your return flight. **(Meals: B)**

Our grading system

Textiles Tour of Southern India is graded as a Tour, as described below.

Tours

Tours may include any of the following activities: sightseeing, visiting local villages, exploring temples, game viewing, birdwatching, husky sledding, mountain flights, city tours and dramatic journeys by road, rail, or river. Occasionally there will be short, gentle walks so that you can properly explore the cultural sites you are visiting.

What the price includes

Mountain Kingdoms aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

What's included:

- ✓ Services of Sue Lawty as trip leader
- ✓ 18 x breakfasts, 18 x lunches and 18 x dinners
- ✓ Good quality hotel accommodation on a twin share basis
- ✓ Two nights on a riceboat on a twin share basis
- ✓ Local English-speaking guide and driver to accompany group throughout
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicle/s
- ✓ Sightseeing and entrance fees as specified in the itinerary
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Group airport transfers on arrival and departure
- ✓ Carbon offset for clients taking our flight-inclusive option
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle

Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

What's not included:

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Tips
- ✗ India visa fees

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Our clients, who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



Villa Shanti or Similar, Pondicherry

Tucked away in the heart of the old French Quarter in Pondicherry, and a short stroll from the promenade and beach, the Villa Shanti is a delightful boutique hotel. The hotel has a wellness centre, plus a bar and restaurant with indoor or outdoor dining on the patio. Rooms have air-conditioning, minibars and coffee/tea making facilities, plus free Wi-Fi.



GRT Grand or Similar, Chennai

Situated close to the famous Pondy Bazaar and other attractions, the GRT is well-placed for exploring Chennai. The hotel's facilities include an indoor pool, wellness centre and a range of eating options whilst the light, modern rooms have tea/coffee makers, mini bars and free Wi-Fi.



Royal Orchid Metropole Hotel, Mysore

The Royal Orchid Metropole Hotel is a four star heritage hotel with lots of old world charm in the heart of Mysore city. Built by the former Maharajah of Mysore in 1920 for his distinguished guests, the hotel is elegant and comfortable, with peaceful gardens, a spa, swimming pool and several dining options. Spacious guest rooms come complete with private balconies and a good range of amenities.



After The Rains Rainforest Lodge

After the Rains is a luxury resort set in a 16 acre spice garden in the Western Ghats. The resort grows its own coffee, spices, fruit, nuts and cocoa employing local villagers on the plantation. Enjoying wonderful mountain and forest views each room has its own balcony, and the lodge has an outdoor pool, gardens, lounge area and restaurant.



The Heritage 1866 or Similar, Thalassery

Located in Thalassery, the 1866 Heritage (affectionately known as the Judge's House) has a fascinating history, reflected in its architecture, furnishings and artefacts. It is close to the beach and has lovely, peaceful gardens. Rooms are large, simple and comfortable, and each has a balcony, air-conditioning and a modern, en suite bathroom. The Heritage is well-known for its excellent, regional food and its warm, friendly service.



Riceboat

Riceboats generally have one, two or three bedrooms each with en suite facilities and exterior space to sit and relax. Bedrooms are air-conditioned although this is only usually switched on during the night (9pm to 5am). Depending upon the group size, we may use two or three smaller boats which are better able to navigate the narrower canals. Each riceboat has a driver and a cook, who will prepare delicious Keralan meals, with fresh ingredients often being purchased along the way.



Fragrant Nature Munnar or Similar, Munnar

The Fragrant Nature in Munnar is a luxury 5 star hotel in a fine elevated location, with great views of the mist-clad mountains. The stylish well-appointed rooms come with cosy fireplaces, and the hotel has all the usual facilities including a spa and fitness centre.



Cranganor Riverside Chateau

Cranganor enjoys a beautiful location on the banks of the Periyar River directly across from the weaving villages of Chendamaangalam. Built in the Indo-Dutch colonial style over two storeys it has colonnaded, wrap-around verandas and just a handful of stylish, uber-comfy rooms. All rooms have outdoor space with delightful views, along with antique furnishings and stylish bathrooms. The chateau has an infinity pool, an Ayurveda spa and a restaurant called the History Cafe where fish from the river and nearby waterways is a speciality.

Meal arrangements

All meals: 18 x breakfasts, 18 x lunches and 18 x dinners

Flight arrangements

Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

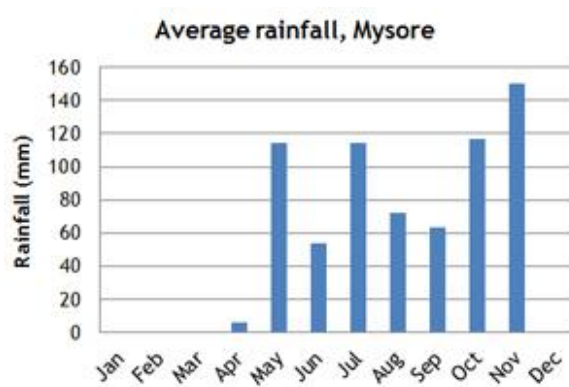
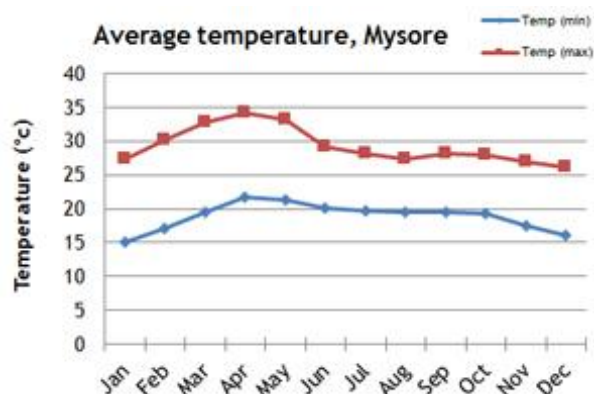
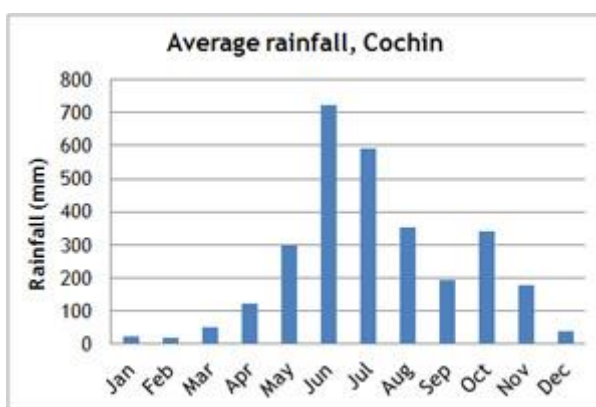
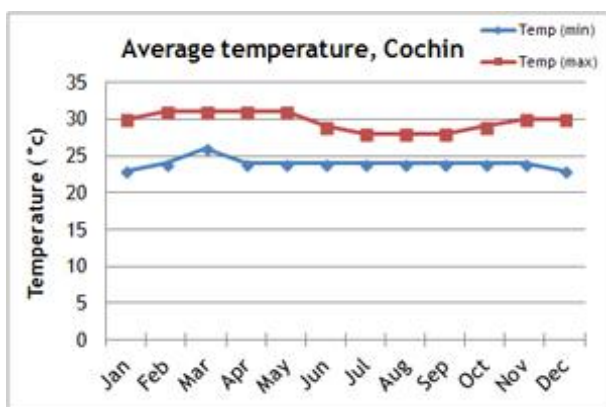
Further information

When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

The nature of adventure travel

Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

Climate information



Extensions

Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400.

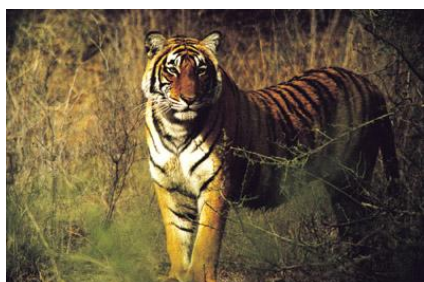


Agra, Taj Mahal & Jaipur - from Delhi

We offer various extensions to Agra, from a one-day visit to see the majestic Taj Mahal to a six-day trip to visit both the Taj and the Amber Fort at Jaipur. All options travel to Agra (from Delhi) on the Shatabdi Express and include the services of an English-speaking guide, sightseeing and private transport.

Ranthambore National Park

Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan is one of the finest national parks in northern India. It has a diverse range of habitats attracting a fantastic variety of wildlife including tigers, leopard, bears and monkeys as well as a large number of exotic birds. We can arrange a three night stay at a jungle camp from where you can enjoy many wildlife watching activities such as nature walks, jeep safaris and bird watching.



Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- This itinerary is unique to Mountain Kingdoms and is led by Sue Lawty, one of Britain's foremost textiles experts.
- It is a rare opportunity to learn more about the many artisan textile trades of the region including handloom weaving, natural dyeing, block printing and hand-spinning.
- We have included hands-on workshops for an immersive experience.
- This tour helps support the skilled local artisans and to keep their traditional crafts alive and thriving.
- Along with textile related visits, there is time to see many of the cultural treasures of the region.
- A relaxing two-night riceboat cruise on the Keralan Backwaters has been included for a change of pace.
- Accommodation has been carefully selected for comfort and character.
- Several members of the Mountain Kingdoms team, have travelled in Southern India and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and additional activities.
- We have our own in-house Flights Manager and can offer flexible flight options. If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights Manager, April, for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: www.mountainkingdoms.com or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

Truly independent

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

Complete financial security

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

No Surcharge Guarantee

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

Award winning Responsible Tourism

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Genuine small group travel

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

Loyalty Discount

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit www.tourismdeclares.com

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

Carbon Offsetting

Already doing:

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

Will do:

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Already doing:

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

Will do:

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.

