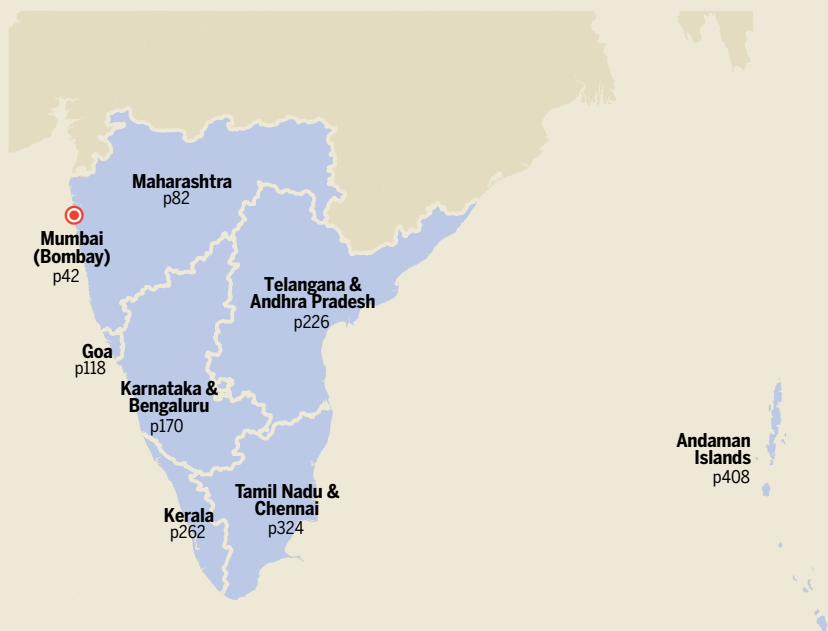




South India & Kerala



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

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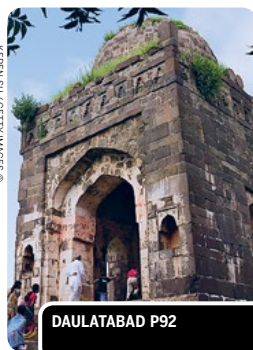
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Itineraries



2 WEEKS Classic Kerala

With its coconut-palm-fringed beaches and lazy backwater boat rides, Kerala can justly claim to be India's most laid-back state. But there's plenty of colour and fun to spice up your tropical idyll: elephant festivals and snake-boat races, Kathakali dance-dramas, quaint colonial quarters and a famously flavoursome cuisine.

Spend a day visiting the zoological gardens and museums in the capital, **Thiruvananthapuram** (Trivandrum), before making the half-hour hop to the beach resort of **Kovalam**. Then shift down another gear at **Varkala**, a holy town with a dizzying cliff-top guesthouse-and-restaurant enclave, where you can chill out with some yoga or surfing. Continue north to **Kollam** (Quilon) and take the tourist cruise along the canals to Alappuzha (Alleppey) with an overnight stop at the Matha Amrithanandamayi Mission, the pink ashram of 'The Hugging Mother'. Reaching **Alappuzha** (Alleppey), you're at houseboat central. Scout for a houseboat or canoe operator and discover what the sublime backwaters are all about. Continuing north by train to **Kochi** (Cochin), take the short ferry ride to the old colonial outpost of Fort Cochin. Aromatic seafood barbecues, welcoming homestays, colonial-era mansions, Kathakali shows and the intriguing Jewish quarter at Mattancherry make this a fascinating place to while away a few days.



Cities, Caves & Coast

City lights, historic sites, beachy bliss, jungle adventure and a touch of colonial-era quaintness – this trip will give you the flavour of all that's best about the south.

Begin in cosmopolitan **Mumbai** (Bombay), the beating heart of Bollywood and home to some of the nation's best spots to shop, eat and drink. Take a sunset stroll along Marine Dr, an oceanside promenade dubbed the 'Queen's Necklace' because of its sparkling night lights, finishing with *bhelpuri* (fried rounds of dough with rice, lentils and chutney) and a neck massage on Chowpatty Beach. Catch a ferry to Elephanta Island from Mumbai's historic Gateway of India to explore its stunning rock-cut temples and the triple-faced sculpture of Lord Shiva.

Next, head northeast to explore the ancient cave art at **Ajanta** and **Ellora**, situated within 150km of each other near Aurangabad. The incredible frescoed Buddhist caves of Ajanta are clustered along a horseshoe-shaped gorge, while the rock-cut caves of Ellora – containing a mix of Hindu, Jain and Buddhist shrines – are set on a 2km escarpment. After soaking up cave culture, journey southwest to **Pune**, Maharashtra's IT hub, with excellent museums and bars and the infamous Osho International Meditation Resort. Next stop: the tropical beach haven of **Goa** for some soul-reviving sandcastle therapy. Wander through a lush spice plantation, visit Portuguese-era cathedrals at Old Goa, shop at Anjuna's colourful flea market and take your pick from dozens of fabulous beach spots, before travelling east to the traveller hotspot of **Hampi** in neighbouring Karnataka. Ramble around Hampi's enigmatic boulder-strewn landscape and imagine what life here was like when it was a centre of the mighty Vijayanagar empire. Make the long trip down to **Mysuru** (Mysore) to explore the Maharaja's Palace, one of India's grandest royal buildings, and shop for silk and sandalwood in its colourful markets. From Mysuru it's an exciting bus ride across the Western Ghats into Kerala and the **Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary**, a pristine forest and jungle reserve and one of the best places in the south to spot wild elephants. Finally, take the hair-raising road down to the coast and make your way to **Kochi**, Kerala's intriguing colonial city where a blend of Portuguese, Dutch and English history combines with wonderful homestays and a buzzing traveller scene.

3
WEEKS

Cities, Hill Stations & Sanctuaries

An offbeat trip through the cities, wildlife parks and hill stations of the Deccan and Western Ghats will give you a true taste of the fascinating variety of inland South India.

Start with a venture to Maharashtra's **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve**, offering some of India's best prospects of sighting wild tigers, then journey south to the old princely capital **Hyderabad**, with its Islamic monuments and labyrinthine bazaars. Continue south to the culinary and shopping delights of India's 21st-century IT capital, **Bengaluru** (Bangalore), and glimpse a royal past at its Bangalore Palace. Next stop: the royal city of **Mysuru** (Mysore). Gawp at the Maharaja's Palace, a grand complex topped with red and white domes. Head south to **Mudumalai Tiger Reserve**, where you can spot wild elephants and take a jeep safari through jungle, and on to the cool hill town of **Ooty** (Udhagamandalam), one of India's most-loved holiday retreats. Take the toy train down to Coimbatore, then cross into Kerala and the tea-covered hills of **Munnar**, with fine hiking and secluded forest accommodation. Finish with some jungle trekking and more chances of a tiger sighting at pretty **Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary**.

12
DAYS

Tamil Nadu's Temples

A journey through Tamil Nadu is a trip into South India's spiritual soul: Tamils are among India's most fervent in their Hindu faith, and their temples are the 3D expression of devotion.

Delve into the history of **Chennai** (Madras) with a wander around the Government Museum before visiting the Kapaleeshwarar and Parthasarathy Temples. Travel south to beachside **Mamallapuram** (Mahabalipuram) and its rock-cut shrines. Move inland to **Tiruvannamalai** where the Arunachaleswar Temple is one of India's largest sacred complexes, below a hill where Shiva appeared as a lingam of fire. Take a break from temple towns in the old French seaside colony of **Puducherry** (Pondicherry), then head inland to the World Heritage-listed medieval temples of **Kumbakonam** and **Thanjavur**. Continue to **Trichy** (Tiruchirappalli), home to the Rock Fort Temple and the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, probably India's biggest temple. Then head south to **Madurai** and the Meenakshi Amman Temple, widely reckoned the pinnacle of South Indian temple architecture. Wind down at **Kanyakumari**, the southern tip of India, with its temple to the sea goddess Kumari.



Isabella Noble

Tamil Nadu & Chennai Isabella's first experience of South India was a masala dosa at Shimla's Indian Coffee House. She has been travelling to India for over five years, but loves the ever-so-slightly more laid-back pace of the friendly South. This time she got lost in Valparai's tea plantations, checked out Chennai's countless bars, then got stuck in the Nilgiris thanks to landslide. Between trips, Isabella lives in London with a wardrobe of Indian shawls. She tweets @isabellamnoble.

Read more about Isabella at:

<http://auth.lonelyplanet.com/profiles/isabellamnoble>



Iain Stewart

Mumbai (Bombay), Maharashtra Iain grew up in Leicester, a very Indian town transplanted to the Midlands, UK (complete with its own curry mile). He first visited India in 1991 and explored the sights at totally the wrong time of year with temperatures approaching 50°C in parts. For this trip he wised up and travelled post-monsoon: bar-hopping in Mumbai, meandering down the Konkan coast and having several near-misses with tigers in Tadoba.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



John Noble

Coordinating Author, Telangana & Andhra Pradesh John, from England, has written about six different Indian states and 20-odd other countries for Lonely Planet. He first experienced South India in the 1980s when Chennai's Triplicane High Rd was clogged with bullock carts, and families milked their buffaloes beside it. Autorickshaws have replaced bullock carts now, but he loves returning to South India because, in a nutshell, there's never a dull moment there! As a long-time fan of William Dalrymple's *White Mughals*, John's biggest thrill of this trip was getting the chance to explore fascinating Hyderabad in depth. He wrote the Plan Your Trip and Understand sections and the Directory and Transport chapters. He tweets @john_a_noble and Instagrams as johnnoble11.

Read more about John at:

<http://auth.lonelyplanet.com/profiles/ewoodrover>



Abigail Blasi

Abigail fell in love with India on her first visit in 1994, and since then she's explored and written on India from north to south and back again. She's covered plenty of other places for Lonely Planet too, from Mauritania and Mali to Rome and Lisbon. Abigail wrote the Booking Trains, Scams, Women & Solo Travellers and Health chapters.



Paul Harding

Goa, Kerala Paul first landed in India in the mid-90s and has returned regularly over the years, usually writing about it. He still has a soft spot for the south, where the pace of life is slower, the food tastier and the beer (usually) colder. For this edition he was fortunate enough to return to Goa and Kerala where he researched beaches and backwaters, homestays and bamboo huts, seafood curries and chicken xacutis.



Trent Holden

Karnataka & Bengaluru, Andaman Islands On his third time co-authoring the *India* book, Trent was assigned with the not-so-shabby task of testing out Bengaluru's microbreweries, searching for tigers in Bandipur NP and checking out Hampi's ruins before hitting the beaches in Gokarna. He then returned to the Andaman Islands for more sun, surf and sand. A freelance travel writer based in London, Trent also covers destinations such as Nepal, Zimbabwe and Japan. In between travels he writes about food and music. You can catch him on Twitter @hombreholden.

OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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