

TEMPLES & BACKWATERS

Chennai * Mahabalipuram * Pondicherry * Tanjore
Madurai * Thekkady * Kumarakom * Houseboat
Cochin * Mumbai

Skeleton Itinerary

DAY 01:	ARRIVE CHENNAI	BY: INT. FLIGHT
DAY 02:	CHENNAI	
DAY 03:	CHENNAI – MAHABALIPURAM	BY: SURFACE
DAY 04:	MAHABALIPURAM – PONDICHERRY	BY: SURFACE
DAY 05:	PONDICHERRY – TANJORE	BY: SURFACE
DAY 06:	TANJORE – TRICHY – MADURAI	BY: SURFACE
DAY 07:	MADURAI	
DAY 08:	MADURAI – PERIYAR	BY: SURFACE
DAY 09:	PERIYAR – KUMARAKOM	BY: SURFACE
DAY 10:	KUMARAKOM	
DAY 11:	KUMARAKOM – COCHIN	BY: SURFACE
DAY 12:	COCHIN	
DAY 13:	COCHIN – MUMBAI	BY: FLIGHT
DAY 14:	MUMBAI	
DAY 15:	DEPART – MUMBAI	BY: INT. FLIGHT

***** Tour Ends *****

TEMPLES & BACKWATERS

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DAY 01

ARRIVE: CHENNAI

BY: INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT

You will arrive Chennai International Airport in the evening. Following customs, immigration formalities and baggage collection, a TWX representative will meet you as you EXIT the ARRIVALS TERMINAL building after which you would be transferred to your hotel.

The East India Company established its presence in southern India on the Bay of Bengal in 1639 with the establishment of Fort St. George. The city of Chennai, formerly known as Madras, grew up around the fort area. It now serves as the capital of Tamil Nadu and is the fourth largest city in India, with over six million inhabitants. It sprawls over a large area yet, in spite of recent industrial growth, seems less congested than other large Indian cities. Its role as a trade center is furthered by rail, road, and air connections in addition to its seaport. It presents both modern and traditional charm, its many British influences juxtaposed with Tamil-Hindu traditions



Upon arrival at the hotel, you will be accorded with a **Traditional Welcome**. Welcoming guest is an age-old tradition. 'Atithi Devobhava' - treat your guest as if he were God. Indian hospitality can be savored immediately as one arrives at the hotel. The guest's forehead is anointed with the traditional red 'tika' which is considered auspicious along with garlanding. Relax with a non-alcoholic welcome drink following which proceed to check in

at your room.

Overnight at the hotel

DAY 02 CHENNAI

After buffet breakfast in the hotel proceed for the sightseeing tour of Chennai.

Firstly you will visit, **Kapaleswarar Temple**, honouring Shiva, dates back to the 13th century AD and is the biggest temple in Chennai. You will then proceed to **Mylapore**, which was inhabited in the 16th century by the Portuguese; visit the **Saint Thomas Church**, named for the Christian disciple ("Doubting Thomas") who lived and taught here in the first century. Later visit, you will **drive past the Marina Beach**,



the second longest in the world, stretching for several miles. Your next stop would be the **Fort St. George**, which is presently, being used by the Tamil Nadu Government. Within the compound is a museum holding many remembrances of the East India Company and the British period. From the British hold of centre you will be driven to Egmore – which is the heart of city to visit the **State Museum** –which is spreading to an area of 16.25 acres of land. Six independent buildings in this Museum campus have 46 galleries.

Come back to your hotel after your visit following that remainder of the day is at leisure.

Overnight at the hotel

DAY 03 CHENNAI - MAHABALIPURAM

In the afternoon you will be driven from Chennai to Pondicherry enroute visit the Mahabalipuram (58 Kms/ 1.30 Hrs).

Mamallapuram or Mahabalipuram was built in the 7th century, is an ancient Pallava port. It is the site of several antique sculptural marvels. Declared as the world heritage site by UNESCO, Mahabalipuram boasts of some of India's most sublime rock-cut art. The only shore temple, which remains here, is the spectacular two-spired shrine, which is unique in that it houses both Vishnu and Shiva in its sanctum. The Pallavas perfected the art of sculpting rocks to build temples without brick, mortar or timber. The open-air bas-reliefs, structured temples, man-made caves and the five monolithic "rathas" (chariots carved from single processions) reflect this art at its best.

Upon arrival at Mahabalipuram proceed to check in at your hotel

In the afternoon you will proceed to visit the **Shore Temple, Arjuna's Penance** & the **Cave Temple**.



The Shore Temple: Though known as the land of Seven Pagodasm, there is only one remaining today. The five-storied Sore Temple is on the sea beach was built by the Pallava King Raja Singha at the end of seventh century in pure Dravidian sculpture. This temple was the last work of Pallava dynasty. Guarding the temple is Lion-King Nandi or the row of oxen. Recently, Sore Temple Complex has been enlisted in the recorded history of World Heritage.

Mandapams/Cave temples: The temples are finely sculptured & carved out in Mahabali. Krishna Temple is the oldest temple. The decorated Krishna stall is depicted with the episodes from Lord Srikrishna's life and the lifting up of Gobardhan hill to give protection Gops & Gopies from the curse of the rain God. The rectangular Ganesh Mandapam was also built carving out of a whole rock and is worshipped still daily.



Arjuna's Penance- This skilfully carved rock of 29X7 metre is the largest vas - relief sculpture in the world. It gets its name from the figure of an

ascetic who is believed to be Arjuna, the hero of Mahabharata, doing penance to obtain a boon from Lord Siva. However, there are others who think that the figure is actually Bhagiratha who entreated Siva to let the river Ganges flow over the earth. Among the other carvings on the rock are animals and heavenly beings witnessing the descent of the Ganges from the Himalayas and some episodes from the Panchatantra tales.

Come back to your hotel after your visit.

Overnight at the hotel

DAY 04 MAHABALIPURAM - PONDICHERRY

After breakfast in the hotel you will be driven from Mahabalipuram to Pondicherry (110 Kms/ 03 Hrs one way).

Pondicherry (new name is Puducherry) has a rich French cultural heritage, having been the capital of the French colonies in India since the 17th century. The French legacy is visible in the well-planned town, neatly laid roads, wide and vibrant beaches, beautiful promenades, architecturally imposing churches and public buildings and the statues. Split into two parts, Pondicherry is, on one hand a bustling Indian Market town, and on the other hand, towards the sea, the streets are emptier, cleaner and decidedly European.

Upon arrival proceed to check in at your hotel



In the afternoon you will proceed to the sightseeing tour of Pondicherry.

You will first visit the **Aurobindo Ashram**. Pondicherry has been a seat of learning and Vedic cultures since ancient times and was also the home of the great Hindu sage Agastya. Pondicherry's mystic spirit found a great resurrection in the twentieth century with the establishment of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Also found here is the

Samadhi or final resting place of Sri Aurobindo, and **the Mother**, which draw devotees.

Move on to the **Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**, noted for its Gothic architecture and stained glass panels, which depict the entire life of Jesus Christ. Visit the **Pondicherry Museum** where on display are findings of Arikamedu, the Chola bronzes and sculptures, glimpses of French heritage,

specimens of modern and traditional handicraft, paintings, armories, carvings and many other things of historical interest.

Come back to your hotel after your visit

Overnight at the hotel

DAY 05 PONDICHERRY - TANJORE

After breakfast in the hotel you will be driven from Pondicherry to Tanjore (185 KMS / 4.30 hours) en-route visiting Chidambaram, the capital of the Cholas from AD 907 to 1310.

Chidambaram is one of the most ancient and most celebrated of shrines in India. It is of great religious as well as historic and cultural significance. Chidambaram is associated with **Nataraja**, or Shiva in his Ananda Tandava pose (the Cosmic Dance of bliss) in the cosmic golden hall and the hall of consciousness (Chit Sabha). Shiva is also worshipped in the "formless form" of the Chidambara Rahasyam, while the temple is known for its Akasa Lingam, an embodiment of Shiva as the formless Space. The word "Koyil" or temple in the Tamil Saivite tradition refers to none other than the Chidambaram Nataraja temple. The dance of bliss, or the Ananda Tandavam of Shiva is said to symbolize the five divine acts (pancha krityas) of creation, sustenance, dissolution, concealment and bestowment of grace. The dance of Shiva has been frozen in metal and held in worships in Nataraja Sabhas, in virtually all of the Saivite temples in Tamilnadu.



After your visit continue your drive to Tanjore. Enroute you will stop at **Paradise Resort** at **Darasuram** for **Lunch**.

Tanjore was the royal city of the Cholas, Nayaks and the Mahrattas. Tanjore was at height of its glory during Rajaraja Cholan. The Big Temple and the other famous temples in the district are known all over the world. Tanjore was the cultural capital of the country in 1790. Tanjore gained prominence during the period of Chola Kings, who made it as their capital.

Upon arrival at Tanjore you will proceed to check-in at your hotel.

In the late afternoon you will proceed to the visit **Brihadeeshwara Temple**, built in the 10th century by Raja Chola



Sri Brihadeeshwara temple is regarded as a genius of ancient Chola architecture. The temple dedicated to Nandi, the Bull has been built from a single granite rock. The dome of the temple also rests on a single granite rock. The best part about the temple is that it has been built in a manner that the shadow of it never falls on the ground. The temple is 216 ft. tall. It is worth mentioning that as many as 74 temples dot the landscape of Thanjavur. During the tour you will

also visit the Tanjore Art Gallery, which houses religious paintings. This form of art evolved and flourished under the patronage of Hindu rulers, Nayaks and Marathas in the 17th and 18th centuries in Thanjavur of Tamilnadu.

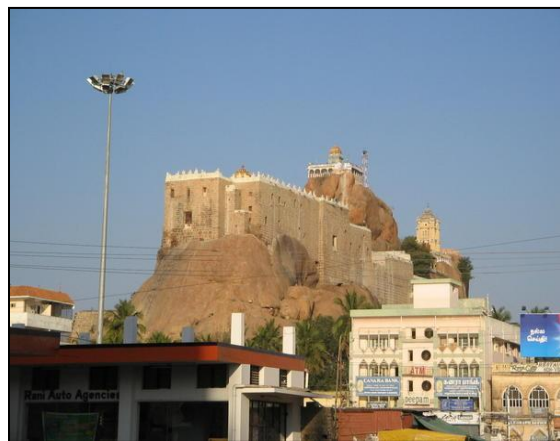
Overnight at hotel

DAY 06 TANJORE – TRICHY - MADURAI

After buffet breakfast at the hotel, you will be driven from Tanjore to Madurai (197 KMS / 06 Hours) visiting Trichy enroute.

Upon arrival at Trichy you will proceed for the sightseeing tour.

You will first visit the **Rock Fort**, which is a landmark of Trichy. The rock is one of the oldest in the world-approximately 3.800 million years, which makes it as old as the rocks of Greenland and older than the Himalayas. A climb of 434 steps leads to the ancient temple of Ganapati on top and a further climb to a Shiva Temple. The most fascinating part of a visit to Trichy is a tour to **Srirangam Island**. Bazaars, schools, homes are all within the temple, a living example of the ancient temple towns of the south. The massive temple has exquisite carvings and fabulous jewels.



After your visit continue your drive to Madurai.

The ancient city of Madurai is one of southern India's oldest with a recorded history going back to the 6th century B.C., has been a seat of learning from

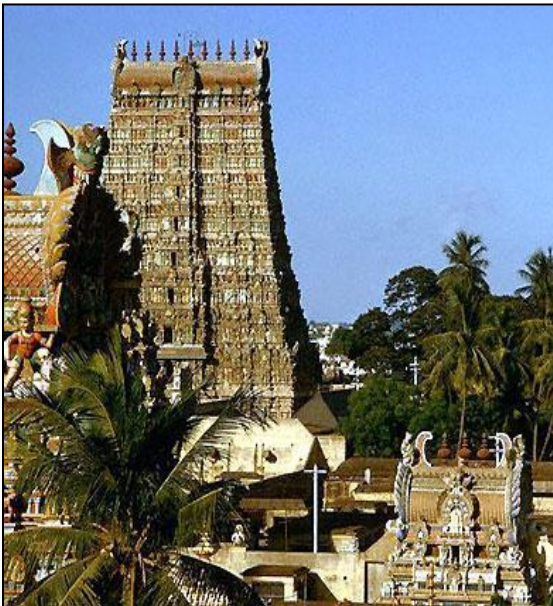
time immemorial and the centre from which the Tamil language developed and flourished. It was well known to the Greeks and Romans with whom the city carried on active trade. The town has been patterned on the lotus flower with the temple of Goddess Meenakshi at the centre.

Upon arrival, proceed for check-in at your hotel.

Overnight at the hotel

DAY 07 MADURAI

After buffet breakfast at the hotel, proceed for a **sightseeing tour of Madurai City.**



Madurai's main attraction is the famous **Meenakshi temple** located in the heart of the old town, a riotously baroque example of Dravidian architecture with gopurams (towers) covered from top to bottom with a breathless profusion of multi-colored images of gods, goddesses, animals and mythical figures. The temple complex is a city within a city and one can spend days exploring its labyrinthine corridors and halls. Another attraction is the **Thirumalai Nayak Palace** (1636) restored by Lord Napier, dance drama concerts are performed daily. **In the evening,** you will once again proceed to the **Meenakshi temple complex** to

witness the **evening Aarti ceremony** in which Lord Shiva is carried in a palanquin accompanied by musicians, temple singers and priests to the temple of his consort Parvati to spend the night.

Special note: Non- Hindus are not allowed inside the inner sanctum of the temple.

Overnight at the hotel

DAY 08 MADURAI - THEKKADY

After breakfast you will be driven from Madurai to Thekkady (140 Kms / 04 hours).

Upon arrival at Thekkady proceed to check in at your hotel

In the afternoon you will proceed to Periyar National Park to view the **wildlife by boat.**

Set in the heart of the Cardamom Hills of Kerala the Periyar National Park and Tiger Reserve, offers a rare opportunity to enjoy South India's wild life and beauty. The park has a picturesque lake at the heart of the sanctuary. Herds of elephant and Sambar, gaur and wild pigs and wander down to the lakeside and can be observed from the launches that cruise the lake. Periyar also harbors the leopard, wild dog, barking deer and mouse deer. On the rocky outcrops along the lake, monitor lizards can be seen basking in the sun.



Overnight at the hotel

DAY 09 PERIYAR - KUMARAKOM

After buffet breakfast at the hotel, you will be driven from Periyar to Kumarakom (135 KMS / 3 HRS) enroute visiting **Spice Plantation.**



The spice plantations of Kerala are fascinating farms to wander in, for different sections of each plantation are dedicated to different spices. Some of the spices cultivated in spice plantations are vanilla, oregano, rosemary, thyme, basil, mint, bay leaf and sage. Being in the heartland, it is not bizarre that you will find the best of fenugreek, white and green pepper, rolls of cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, star anise, coriander, cloves and the list is

endless.

Continue your drive to Kumarakom after your visit. Enroute you will stop at **Plantation Bungalow, Kanjirappally for lunch.**

In the lush backwaters of Kottayam in Kerala, lies a veritable paradise, which is called Kumarakom, or the

Temples 8



'Venice of the East'. Palm fringed narrow canals winding through the vast expanse of paddy fields, and the neat tiny hamlets lined up along either side of the canals are panoramic sights one can never forget. Kumarakom is Kerala's heartland of lagoons, palm fringed lakes, and paddy fields, inter-linked with hundreds of winding canals, with the typical low slung country boats that carry everything from people to fish, rice and coconuts to the milkman and newspaper boy, local politicians and priests to wedding parties.

Upon arrival proceed to check in at your hotel

Overnight at the hotel

DAY 10 KUMARAKOM

After breakfast in the hotel remainder of the day is at leisure.

Overnight at the hotel

Optional: Lunch at Philipkutty's Farm



Today in time you will be transferred to Philipkutty's farm by boat for the lunch. The cuisine is predominantly Syrian Christian with a strong backwater influence. Most of the dishes served are centred around fish, farm vegetables and fruits, duck, chicken and occasionally other meats, supplemented with rice and rice based local breads like appam, string hoppers etc. Some of our specialities are karimeen (pearlspot fish) fry, fish molee,

prawn and scampi preparations, duck roast and curry, and red hot Kerala fish curry to name a few.

DAY 11 KUMARAKOM – ALLEPPEY - COCHIN

After breakfast in the hotel in time you will board a **Houseboat cruise** from **Kumarakom to Alleppey** on the backwaters.

Houseboats are also known as the "Ketuvallam" or the Rice Boat. Ketuvallam ride can be the

Temples



most romantic ride you can ever have in the middle of the lake Vembanad Lake/canal. A backwater comprises of a unique web of rivers, lakes, bays, lagoons and canals extending into the villages and town of the city. Backwaters are a central part of Kerala's Tourism Synopsis, making an absolute cruiser through the twisting and meandering water streams. This backwater journey through the narrow canals crossing exquisite villages of Kerala, embellished with lush green paddy fields, tall coconut grooves makes it a most spellbinding site.

Upon arrival at Alleppey Jetty your chauffer will receive you and transfer you to Cochin.

More popular as the Queen of the Arabian Sea, Cochin is a cluster of islands on the vast expanse of the Vembanad Lake. The Lake opens out into the Arabian sea here to form one of the finest natural harbors in the world. It is this natural advantage that has made Cochin a fascinating blend of the cultures and influences of explorers and traders. The Arabs, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, and the British have all left their mark here. The Jewish



synagogue, the Dutch palace, the Chinese fishing nets, and other remnants of European and Asian architecture merge smoothly into the traditional fabric of the seaport city.

Upon arrival proceed to check-in at your hotel

In the evening you will be taken to a **Kathakali Dance Show** at a local theater.

At the **Kathakali dance center** you will witness the most elaborate of the dance forms in southern India. Here you will witness the artists readying themselves up with the make up for

the final performance. Kerala owes its transnational fame to this nearly 300 years old classical dance form, which combines facets of ballet, opera, masque and the pantomime. It is said to have evolved from other performing arts like Kootiyattam, Krishnanattam and Kalarippayattu. Kathakali explicates ideas and stories from the Indian epics and Puranas. Presented in the temple precincts after dusk falls Kathakali is heralded by the Kelikottu or the beating of drums in accompaniment of the Chengila (gong). The riches of a happy blending of color, expressions, music, drama and dance are unparalleled in any other art form.

Come back to your hotel after the dance show.

Overnight at the hotel

DAY 12 COCHIN

After breakfast in the hotel you will proceed for the sightseeing tour of Cochin.

You will first visit **The Dutch Palace** at Mattancherry, which was built by the Portuguese and presented to the Raja of Cochin in 1555 AD. It acquired the present name after 1663 when the Dutch carried out extensions and repairs in the palace. At no time did the Portuguese or Dutch stay here. Its interiors are decorated with murals from the Ramayana and there are some lively displays of royal costumes and palanquins. You will then visit the



oldest **Jewish Synagogue** in India, built in 1568; it was destroyed by the Portuguese and rebuilt by the Dutch a century later.

From Mattancherry continue your drive to **Chinese fishing nets**. The cantilevered fishing nets line the entrance to the harbour mouth. Chinese traders are believed to have originally introduced them in the 14th century although, today parts of the nets are known by Portuguese names. From the Chinese fishing nets you will visit **St. Francis Church**, originally named after Santo Antonio and dedicated to him as the Patron Saint of Portugal, St. Francis Church is the first church to have been in the new European influenced tradition. Originally a wooden building was replaced by the present stone building. Vasco De Gama died on the site in 1524 and was originally buried in the cemetery. 14 years later his body was removed to Portugal. The church was renamed St. Francis in 1663.

Come back to your hotel after your tour

Remainder of the day is at leisure.

Overnight at the hotel

Optional: Cooking demonstration followed by dinner at Ms Nimmy Paul's House

Today in time you will be driven to **Ms. Nimmy Paul's House**, for **cooking demonstration** followed by home cooked dinner in a friendly ambience.



Nimmy is a cookery instructor with more than 10 years' experience. Nimmy and Paul enjoy exchanging information about their lifestyle, culture and traditions. Nimmy has taken classes in Indian, Traditional Kerala and what is called Continental cookery in India. She has taught salads, soups, snacks and puddings and also made food for small parties. Nimmy conducts Traditional Kerala Syrian Christian Cookery classes for visiting guests, food writers, chefs and others involved with culinary visual media services. The warm hospitality, the friendly atmosphere and good food they offer has been very well appreciated by their guests. Many of their guests continue to consult Nimmy on Kerala Cookery even after they

return to their home countries.

Quite a few culinary writers, food experts and chefs have also visited Nimmy Paul to learn traditional food preparation methods.

DAY 13 COCHIN – MUMBAI

BY: FLIGHT

After buffet breakfast in the hotel morning is at leisure.

Later in time a TWX representative will meet you in the hotel lobby and transfer you to airport to board your flight for Mumbai:

Departure: Cochin	at: 1300 Hours	By: 9W 402 (Jet Airways)
Arrive: Mumbai	at: 1440 Hours	

Today the cosmopolitan population of the city consists of people from all over the country. It is centre of industry, commerce and foreign trade, a city of skyscrapers and huts (a result of too quick growth and inadequate accommodation), a city of milling crowds and vitality, a city on the move. Mumbai is not just India's largest city, it is also its commercial capital, industrial powerhouse, busiest port, fashion capital, home to 'Bollywood' (India's Hollywood), world's biggest textile market – the list goes on and on.

Upon arrival proceed to check in at your hotel

Overnight at the hotel

DAY 14 MUMBAI

After buffet breakfast in the hotel you will be driven to the Gateway of India to board the motor launch, which will take you to the famous **Elephanta Caves** (closed on Mondays and subject to weather conditions).

These caves house rock cut temples dating back to the 5th century CE. The Elephanta Island was so named by the Portuguese, after the statue of an elephant near the landing area of the island. These rock cut temples dedicated to Shiva Mahadeva are rich in sculptural content. These rock cut temples were created by carving out rock, and creating the columns, the internal spaces and the images. The entire temple is akin to a huge sculpture, through whose corridors and chambers one can walk. The entire complex was created through a process of rock removal. Some of the rock surfaces are highly finished while



some are untreated bare rock. The caves are reached by climbing 100 steps to the top of the hill.



Come back to Gateway of India after your visit following that you will proceed for the sightseeing tour of Mumbai:

The tour starts from the **Gateway of India** Gateway of India is the landmark of Bombay, which, was before the advent of air travel, the only gateway to India. It was built to commemorate the visit of King

George and Queen Mary to India in 1911. You will be then driven along **Marine Drive**, the sea - Front Boulevard. It is also known as the Queen's Necklace as in the evening, the breeze from the Arabian Sea comes over Marine Drive and as the streetlights on this U-shaped road light up, the view from south Bombay's skyscrapers or from the exclusive residential area, is that of a Queen's Necklace.

Your first stop will be the **Jain Temples**, built of marble and dedicated to the first Jain Tirthankara. From the temples you will be driven along **Malabar Hill** via the **Tower of Silence** - a round stone construction on which Parsis place their dead to be eaten by the vultures and **Hanging Gardens** which is

built over Bombay's reservoir. From here one can get a panoramic view of picturesque Marine Drive. You will then be driven to the **Dhobi Ghats** a huge open-air laundry, which makes an interesting viewing.

Continue your drive to **Mani Bhawan** (Gandhi Memorial), the house where the Father of the Nation stayed on his early visits to the city. The room, in which Gandhi stayed, preserved as it was, and the scenes of Gandhi's life in photographs and models are of special interest. Your last stop will be the **Prince of Wales Museum** (*closed on Mondays*) - gothic and Moorish architecture in the striking confluence of styles that came to be known as Indo Saracenic. It boasts of a significant collection of Indus valley artifacts some of them dating back to more than 5000 years. Most impressive are the miniature paintings - nearly 2000 of them - from various stylistic schools of India.



Come back to your hotel after your visit.

Overnight at the hotel



Optional: Dinner at Khyber Restaurant

In the evening you will be driven to **Khyber Restaurant** - one of the famous restaurants in Mumbai for **dinner**. Khyber offers an experience that you would never forget. The works of India's most famous painters - Anjolie Ela Menon and MF Husain - adorn the mud-caked, designer walls of this restaurant. Khyber is an elegant, up-market restaurant serving exquisite Northern Indian, Mughal food, using the best, freshest ingredients and a charcoal grill.

A grand entrance foreshadows a beautiful interior, stone-effect plastering embellished with delicately carved arches and screens in the Mughal style. As you would expect from a restaurant with a Frontier theme, the kebabs and meats are delicious. Every chunk of the juicy Kebab Platter is worth its price. Also, go for the Dal Makhani and the Kadhai Paneer. And take your time...the food and the walls offer plenty to keep you occupied.

DAY 15 DEPART: MUMBAI

BY: INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT



Today in time a TWX representative will meet you and transfer you to International airport to board your flight for back home.

***** Tour Ends *****