

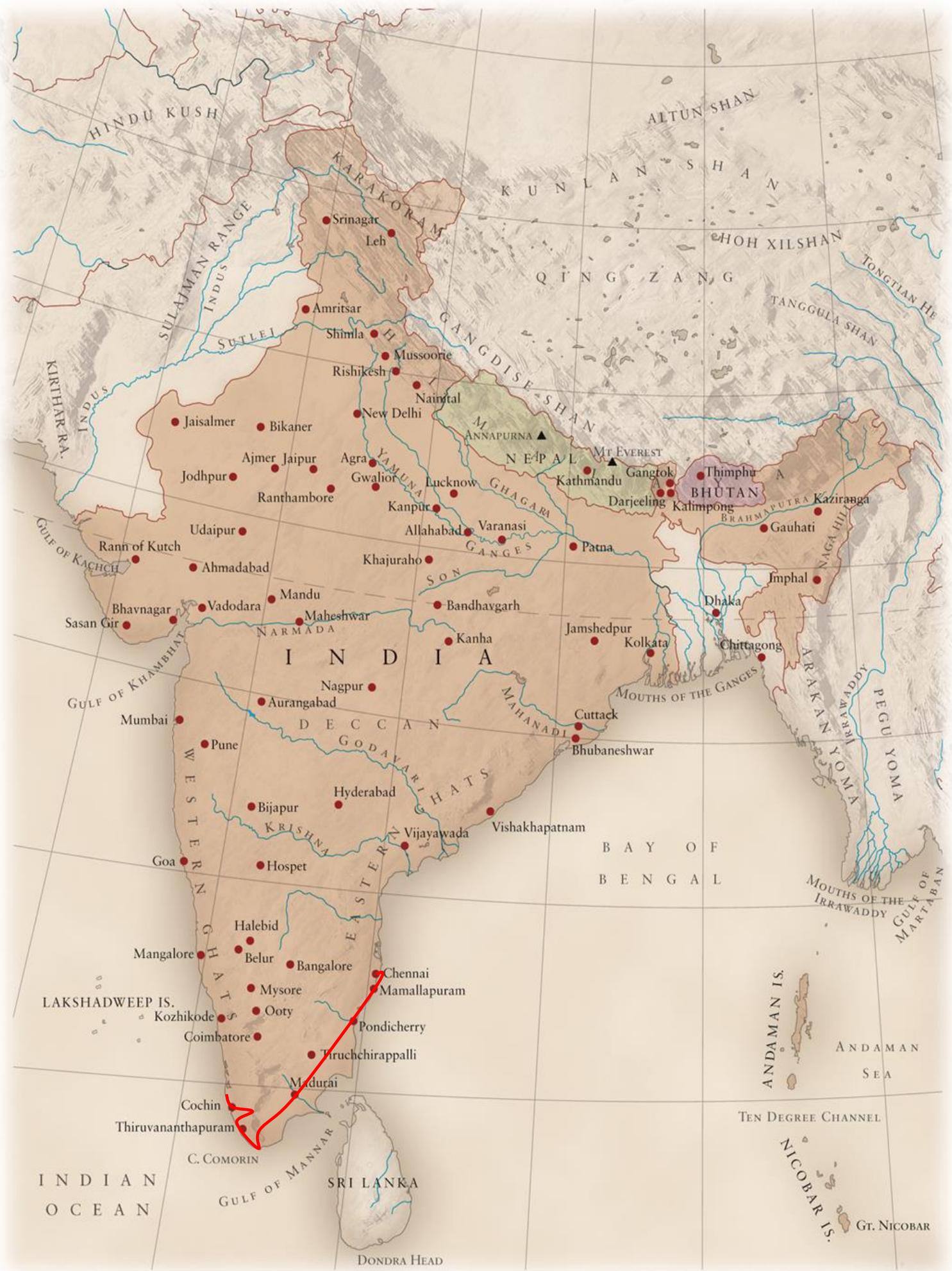


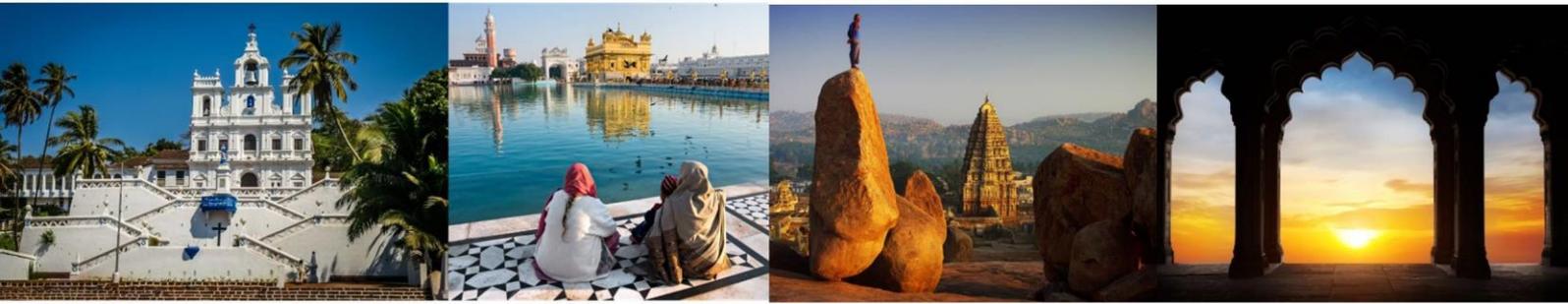
Seven & a Half Churches

The legacy of St. Thomas' travels in India

Group tour Led by Rev. Mark Woodrow

17th September to 4th October 2018





INTRODUCTION

When 16th century European priests arrived in southern India to introduce Christianity, they were told that a more famed Christian missionary had been there many years beforehand.

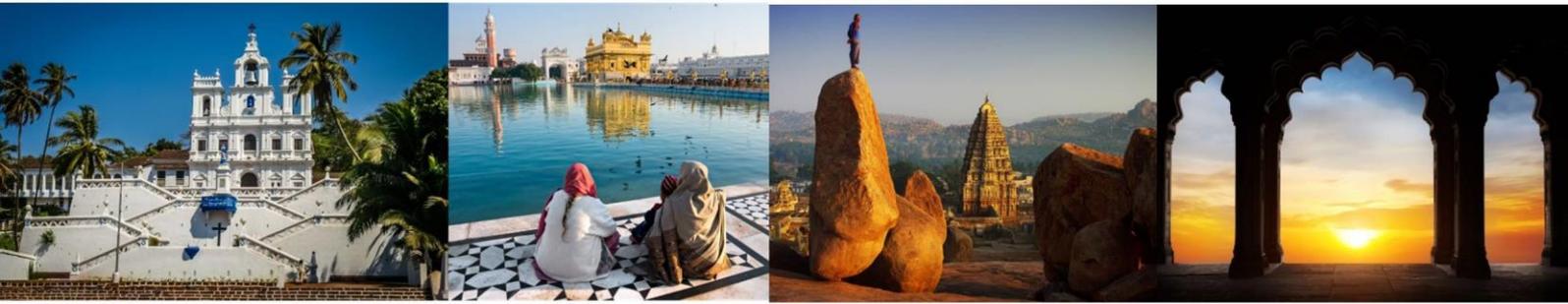
As they travelled in and around the regions of Travancore and Cochin, the priests found that there were indeed a long-established community of Christians, and the man who first converted them was none other than St. Thomas the Apostle (the “Doubting Thomas”), who it was said, arrived in India aboard a Roman trading vessel in 52 AD.

Now, whether St. Thomas himself actually preached under the palm trees of Travancore and Cochin more than 1900 years ago, in the end come down to an act of faith. One thing is certain though and that is that Indian Christian traditions predate any in Europe, and for the more than 2 million Christians in the region there is no doubt.

However, just like St. Thomas, it is easier to believe when you can see and touch things for yourself, and so to trace these historic roots and traditions for yourself I am inviting you to join me in discovering these in depth first-hand.

Together, we will explore these unusual stories, the “seven and a half” churches founded by Thomas, and the Christian traditions of south India. Our journey will take us along the south west Malabar coastline, through the backwaters of Kerala to the very southern tip of the subcontinent, before traveling on to the Coromandel coast in the east, where, tradition tells us that St. Thomas met his end at the hands of an angry king on a hilltop just outside modern-day Chennai (Madras).

Along the way we will visit a modern-day legacy of St Thomas’ Christian influence, as we visit the Donhavur Fellowship, a community founded by the late Anglican missionary and spiritual writer Amy Carmichael.

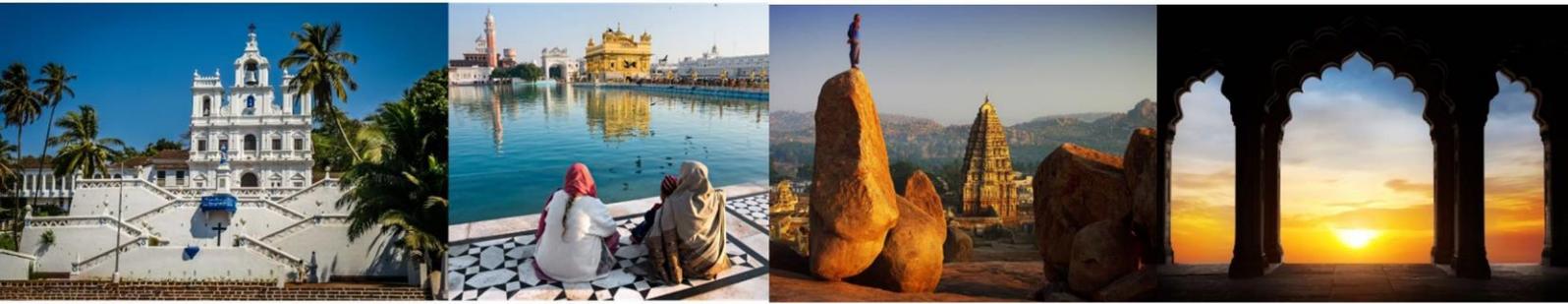


As well as experiencing and participating in the Christian traditions; we will also take the opportunity to visit the magnificent Hindu temples in Madurai and the UNESCO World Heritage sites in Mahabalipuram – all with plenty of time to relax, shop for gifts or handmade clothes, eat well and to enjoy all that India has to offer.

This tour really does offer something for all, whether you have travelled to South India before, or a new to the region or country, this tour will enable you to meet the real people and explore those places overlooked by tourists – allowing you to become a pilgrim instead and to follow in paths once trodden by saints.

I very much look forward to travelling with you.

The Revd Mark Woodrow



ITINERARY

**London – Cochin – Kodungallur – Kumarakom – Kollam –
Kanyakumari – Dohnavur – Madurai – Mahabalipuram - Chennai**

DAY 1: MONDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER 2018: OVERNIGHT FLIGHT TO INDIA

Meet at Heathrow to board Emirates flight EK0002, departing Heathrow at 13:40 and arriving at Dubai after midnight at 00:40 (7 hour flight). At Dubai transfer to connecting Emirates flight EK0530, departing Dubai at 02:45 and arriving at Cochin at 08:05 (3 hours 50 minute flight – arriving on Friday 8th February).

DAY 2: TUESDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2018: RELAX ON THE BEACH

Arrive in Cochin International Airport at 08:05 and transfer 25km to Club Mahindra Cherai Beach. Today is a day to relax after the overnight flight, enjoy the pool and have a stroll on the beach.

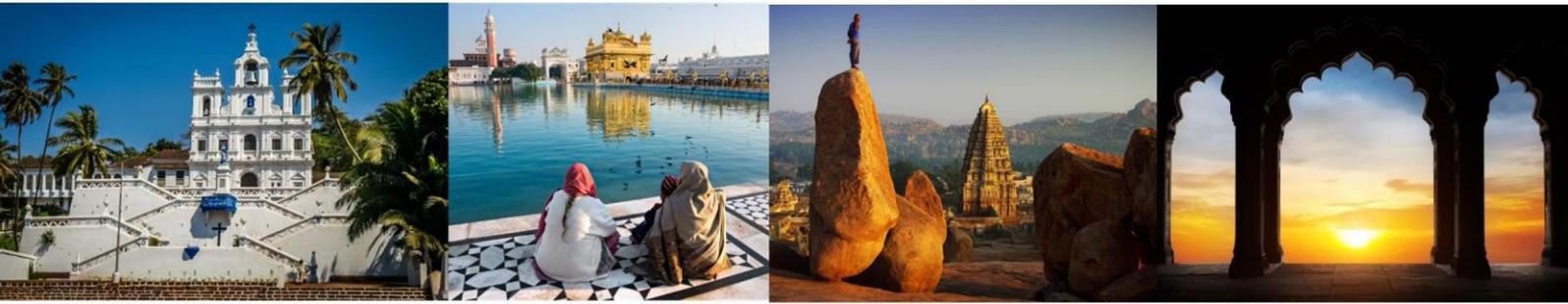
Overnight in Club Mahindra Cherai Beach

DAY 3: WEDNESDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2018: DAY TRIP AROUND CRANGANORE

Day visit to the Marthoma Pontifical shrine at Kodungallur (old English name Cranganore) the first church built by St. Thomas, as well as Kottakkavu Mar Thoma Syro-Malabar Pilgrim Church in North Paravur, and on to the Muziris Heritage Project. Overnight in Club Mahindra Cherai Beach.

DAY 4: THURSDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER 2018: THE CHURCH AT PALAYOOR

Today we drive out to another of Thomas' churches, the St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Palayoor, and back to relax at the resort. Overnight in Club Mahindra Cherai Beach.



DAY 5: FRIDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER 2018: TO THE BACKWATERS

This morning we will drive south along the coast to explore the harbor town of Fort Cochin, before driving down to check into the Punnamada Backwater Resort. On the way we will stop at another of St Thomas' churches at Kokkamangalam near Cherthala.

Overnight in Punnamada Backwater Resort

DAY 6: SATURDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER 2018: DAY AT LEISURE

Today is a day at leisure to enjoy the Punnamada Backwater Resort.

Overnight in Punnamada Backwater Resort

DAY 7: SUNDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER 2018: TO NIRANAM, NILAKKAL AND KOLLAM

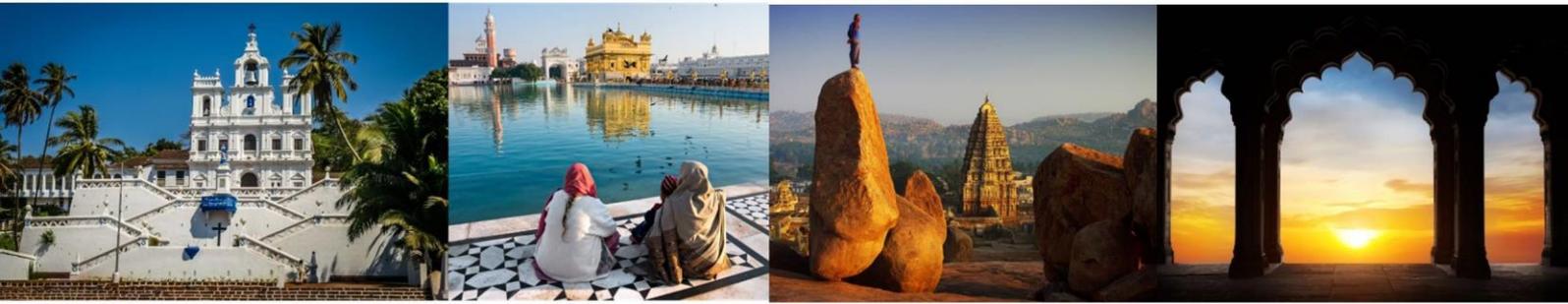
Today is our only long drive, as we must venture, first to Niranam Church, then off the beaten track into rural Kerala to visit St. Thomas' Nilakkal Church in Angamoozhy, and on to the coastal town of Kollam. The total distance will be 200km in about 6 hours but with beautiful scenery to enjoy.

Overnight in Fragrant Nature Kollam

DAY 8: MONDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2018: KOLLAM.

One of Thomas' seven and a half churches is believed to have been built here in Kollam but has since been lost to the Arabian sea. Here we will meet members of the local Christian community to learn more about their traditions.

Overnight in Fragrant Nature Kollam



DAY 9: TUESDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER 2018: DRIVE FROM KOLLAM TO ANANTYA

We will leave the coast and head inland to the hills to spend a couple of days at the beautiful lakeside resort of Anantya. The 105km should take about 3 hours.

Overnight in Anantya Resorts, Chittar Lake

DAY 10: WEDNESDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2018: ANANTYA

A day at leisure to put your feet up or enjoy a leisurely stroll out in nature, have a swim in the pool or enjoy the spa.

Overnight in Anantya Resorts, Chittar Lake

DAY 11: THURSDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER: THE HALF CHURCH & THE LAND'S END OF INDIA

Today we continue our journey to India's southernmost point at Kanyakumari, the place where three oceans meet: the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. On the way we will be stopping at the "half church" at Thiruvithamkode to find out why it is only half a church. The total driving distance today will be 65km.

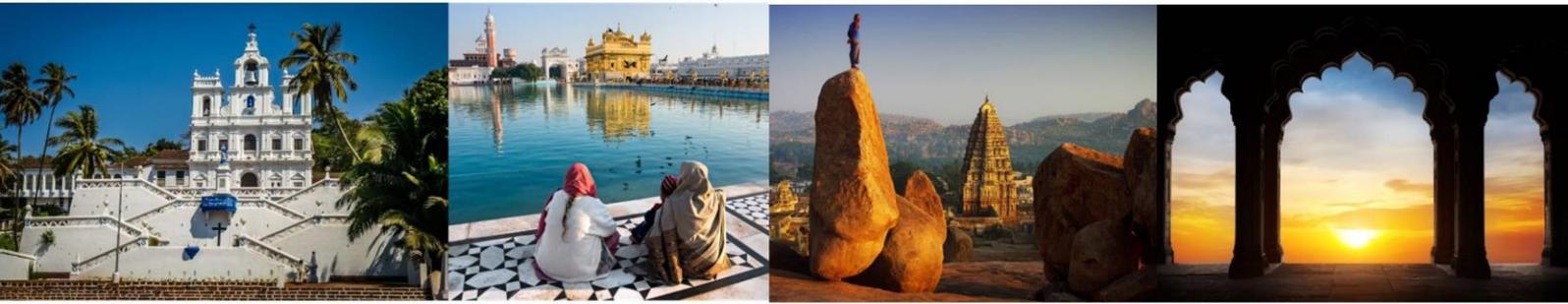
Overnight in Sparsa Resort, Kanyakumari

DAY 12: FRIDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER 2018: DOHNAVUR DAY TRIP

This morning we will drive 55km from Kanyakumari to spend the day at the Dohnavur Fellowship, the centre founded by Irish missionary Amy Carmichael.

Evening return drive to Kanyakumari.

Overnight in Sparsa Resort, Kanyakumari



DAY 13: SATURDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2018: DRIVE TO MADURAI

Morning boat ride to Vivekananda Rock Memorial and Thiruvalluvar Statue, before driving to Madurai - 245km (about 4 hours along National Highway 44, a faster road which connects north and south India) to the ancient city of Madurai where we check into the calm oasis of the Heritage Madurai hotel.

Overnight in Heritage Madurai.

DAY 14: SUNDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2018: TEMPLES OF MADURAI

The Shri Meenakshi Temple in Madurai is arguably the finest and most fascinating temple complex in India – the site houses several shrines surrounded by 14 large colourful gateway towers. Just a mile down the road, we also stop to visit the impressive 17th century king's palace of Thirumalai Nayakkar Mahal. The afternoon will be at your leisure and a great opportunity for shopping.

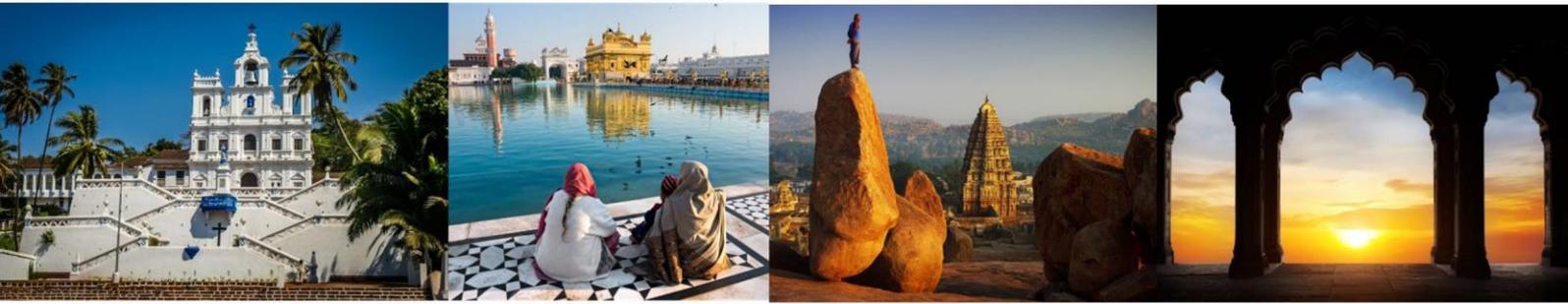
Overnight in Heritage Madurai

DAY 15: MONDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2018: FLY TO CHENNAI, DRIVE TO MAHABALIPURAM

Transfer from hotel to Madurai airport to board Air India flight AI-672, departing Madurai at 13:15 and arriving at Chennai at 14:20 (1 hour 5 minute flight).

On arrival transfer 50km from Chennai airport to Mahabalipuram and check into Chariot Beach Resort.

Overnight in Chariot Beach Resort, Mahabalipuram



DAY 16: TUESDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2018: SHORE TEMPLE AT MAHABALIPURAM

Relax today and enjoy a tour of the famous ancient shore temple at Mahabalipuram, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Overnight in Chariot Beach Resort, Mahabalipuram

DAY 17: WEDNESDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2018: THE LAST DAYS OF THOMAS

In the morning we will drive into Chennai, home to San Thome Basilica, a cathedral supposedly built over the tomb of St. Thomas. We will also visit St. Mary's Anglican Church – the oldest British building in India – and on to climb St. Thomas Mount, the hill on top of which it is said that St Thomas was martyred by the spear, drawing our pilgrimage to a close.

Overnight in The Raintree Hotel (St. Mary's Road), Chennai.

DAY 18: THURSDAY 4TH OCTOBER 2018: RETURN INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURE

Early morning transfer to Chennai International Airport to board Emirates flight EK0545 departing Chennai at 09:45 and arriving at Dubai at 12:40 (4 hour 25 minutes flight). At Dubai transfer to connecting Emirates flight EK0003, departing Dubai at 14:30 and arriving at Heathrow at 18:20 (7 hour 50 minute flight).

