

## Mindful Stitching tour 2025

4 – 17 January 2025

### Zen Stitching from East to West across Southern India.

Join us to explore the hidden textiles of Southern India. Starting in Chennai in the east, a few of our textile highlights there will include meeting with fellow quilters to exchange ideas, exploring Kalamkari painting on fabric, and finding out about hand woven silk saris. Moving to Kerala in the west we will enjoy the luxury of a houseboat whilst navigating the lagoons and then onto the peace, calm and comfort of a lakeside retreat. There, we can enjoy mindful stitching in a creative environment interspersed with optional textile related visits and bird watching. A relaxed pace will be the keynote of this tour with a balance between visits to local experts and time to learn from our in-house textile expert Pat Archibald

You also have the option to extend your holiday exploring the sunny beaches of Kerala like Marari or Kovalam beaches.... Or any other place you may have in mind. Please speak to us.

### Tour Highlights

- Exclusive exhibition of local quilter's work with a show & tell your quilt session.
- Workshop on hands on Kowdhi quilt art form.
- Quilt fabric & material shopping.
- Walking tour in a Chennai wholesale local fabric market with shopping opportunities.
- Workshop with hands-on in Kalamkari painting.
- Witnessing a Bharatnatyam classical dance & music class.
- Visit to a Keralan style handloom weaver's cooperative society for a day.
- Kathakali dance & story performance
- Spice trading market of Cochin & it's Jewish & Portuguese hold.
- Extend your holiday in Kerala and indulge in some ayurveda massages & relax on the Sunny Beaches!
- Mindful stitching led by a UK Textile expert.

## Saturday 4 January

We can offer departures from London (or other airports) for your overnight flight to Chennai....

## Sunday 5 January

...Arrive in the morning at the **Chennai** International airport. Formerly & still fondly called Madras, when under the British Military garrison and East India Company's trading outpost. Situated on the Coromandel Coast of Bay of Bengal is a busy metropolis with a rich heritage & spiritual hold.

We will meet you in the international arrivals meeting area after you have cleared immigrations and collected bags. Look for a Darjeeling Tours paging board.

Check-in your city hotel with rest of the day at leisure to acclimatise. We will venture out in the second half of the day to visit the highlights of the city to visit it's iconic landmark **Marina Beach** for a short walk,

**Kapaleeshwarar Temple** dedicated to Lord Shiva, a quick photo stop by the heritage building with arches & artwork at the **Egmore Railway station**. (B,D)



## Monday 6 January

Morning visit to the **Kalashetra Foundation**, spread over almost 100 acres by the seashore in Chennai, the foundation, as it is known today, is a vital centre for the study & performance of fine arts.

This is our exclusive guided tour, led by an eminent person well versed in the field of Art and Culture. The walk will take you through the story and spirit of Kalakshetra, while stopping by iconic spots. The Weaving Centre produces hand spun silk, silk-cotton, and cotton saris, dance dhavanis, duppatas, and dress materials. The walk will include an opportunity to sit through:

- The Morning Prayer at the Banyan tree
- Loop through various spots such as the Instruments Cottage, the Vishnu Statue, Tagore Hall, Padma Pushkarini, Dance, Music and Visual Arts Department, the Ayyanar Shrine (Village Shrine) and the Crafts Education and Research Centre, the weaving process and its variations.
- Hands on Kalamkari painting and hand block printing process. Literally

meaning 'pen work', are paintings done on textile with vegetable or natural dyes.

Late afternoon, we plan to visit the local markets especially the famous street of cotton goods & fabrics. Return to our hotel by 1800 hrs. (B,D)

### Tuesday 7 January

This morning, we have a short transfer to a private studio to experience the rich quilts on exhibit especially for us. A curated exhibition preview in **Kowdhi demo** and workshop wherein you will be encouraged to try your hand at creating a small Kowdhi. Through various motifs, the artists also communicate a story about the historical & cultural context of the quilts. We return to our hotel late afternoon. (B,D)



### Wednesday 8 January

Today we have a free day to enjoy the city at own pace! Or just enjoy a mindful stitching on the rooftop lounge overlooking the glorious Chennai city.

We also aim at visiting one of the annual event organised by a Women's council which focuses on Revisiting the Art of Handweaving and Natural Dyeing. A platform to present creations, stories and innovations to a global audience, meet artisans, designers, scholars and enthusiasts, gaining insights and skills from global experts. We are awaiting the dates of the event to be finalised for 2025. (B,D)

### Thursday 9 January

After breakfast, we will transfer to Chennai airport to board our short flight to Cochin which is on the south-west coast. We will check-in our hotel for three nights.

Late afternoon, we experience the most iconic dance performance of '**Kathakali**' Indian classical dance & considered as one of the most dramatic & complex theatre performance. It is a story play genre of art, but



one distinguished by the elaborately colourful make-up and costumes of the traditional male actor-dancers. We will get an inside peek of the backstage where the artists prepare hours earlier for the extra ordinary colourful make up. Return to our hotel (B,D).

### Friday 10 January

A relaxed start of the day with a stroll down from our hotel in the **Fort Kochi to Mattanchery (Dutch) Palace Museum**, walk through the lovely market area with art galleries, cafés & shops. We will venture out to the Spice trading wholesale market to cherish the sight of exotic spices & herbs being sold in large quantities and of course the aroma all around !

Sunset view of the **Chinese Fishing nets** before returning to our hotel. (B,D)

### Saturday 11 January

Today we have a visit planned to the outskirts of Kochi, famous for its handloom tradition. Many clusters of cooperative societies involving women weavers thrive in this region. The saris are crafted from 80/100 count yarns with traditional white and gold as well as coloured borders. Weavers in this village were under the official patronage of the feudal family of Paliam, who served as chief ministers for the Rajas of Cochin.



Textiles are woven on frame looms, and their texture is slightly heavier. A typical weave from this village is called a 'Mundu' (a cloth draped around the waist) has coloured borders with a matching-coloured stripe, and only small amounts of Kasavu (gold border) for ornamentation. Also visit one of the projects that links the weaving communities to travellers who can enjoy the stories of the weaver communities and be a part of the weaving experience.

We will return by road in our coach to stay overnight. (B,D)

## Sunday 12 January

This morning, a short transfer to **Kumarakom**, which is synonymous with lakes & lagoons to embark on your exclusive two-bedroom houseboat and enjoy a very relaxing trip on Lake Vembanad in the famous Kerala backwaters. These boats are known as '**Kettuvallam**', thatched roof covers over wooden hulls. Gaze through the lakes & lagoons and plenty of birds chirping around!



In the evening, we will transfer from our houseboats to a typical Kerala style wooden canoe boat to navigate through tiny lagoons experiencing the lifestyle of the villagers and make a visit to one of the most famous industry of **coir-making**.

We return to our houseboat for a comfortable overnight with meals served on board. A definite tick on your bucket list! (B,L,D)

## Monday 13 January

Watch the sunrise and gaze through the lagoons with plenty of birds chirping around!

After breakfast, we unwillingly disembark at the jetty point which happens to be our lakeside luxury resort for the next four nights. (B,D)



## Tuesday 14 January

Free day at leisure to soak in the sun and abundant views of the calming waters of the Vembanad lake.

Enjoy Mindful Stitching for couple of hours during the day by the lake. (B,D)

## Wednesday 15 January

The day is free at leisure to continue your Mindful Stitching with our textile expert.

Optional visit to the **Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary** can be organised which has a variety of species of migratory birds from Himalayas and as far as Siberia. (B,D)



## Thursday 16 January

Another free day to take in the calm, serene & rich views of the greenery all around.

We will offer a relaxing short excursion to the **Kumarakom market area** with its vibrant and bustling bazaar that have a fine selection of handicrafts on display. A wholesale market deals in various items of brass, coir and other handicraft items. The streets of the town are lined with stores selling hand-woven textile items, intricate handmade jewellery and brass sculptures that make for great memorabilia. Gorgeous Kerala silk sarees and classic Kathakali masks are some of the best offerings of the markets of Kumarakom.

Return to your resort by afternoon. (B,D).

## Friday 17 January

An early morning transfer to Cochin airport for our flight to arrive UK by evening....

### What's included

- Economy class flights to/from India in fully inclusive price.
- Accommodation in 5 star hotels & resort.
- Buffet breakfast and dinner daily. Full board (including lunch as well) on the houseboat.
- All transport by deluxe airconditioned vehicles with experienced drivers.
- Workshop in Kalashetra Foundation
- Private exhibition with workshop in Kowdhi quilting.
- Services of a Darjeeling Tours Limited Tour Manager.

## Darjeeling Tours

- All tips throughout the tour (except for the Tour Manager) are included and will be dealt with on your behalf.
- A lot more fun & untold authentic insight into India!
- Personal and incidental expenses are not included.

On a daily basis, meals provided are shown with the following key: B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner.

### **Price**

Per person basis on twin/double sharing basis.

Fully inclusive price from London: **£ 5,250**

Ground only price (international flights excluded): **£ 4,450**

Single supplement: **£ 1,485**

### **Flights**

If you would prefer to travel to India from a regional UK airport, we will do our best to find you something suitable. It usually works well from Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh, and can sometimes work from other airports too. Please let us know if you require a Premium Economy or Business and we will be happy to quote the supplement.

Please note that all carriers, train times and flight times are subject to change at any time.