

WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



KERALA SOUTH INDIA

PHOTOGRAPHY RETREAT

HIGHLIGHTS

- Coastal photography
- Chinese fishing nets
- Bustling markets
- Tea plantations
- Misty sunrises
- Fishing villages & fishermen at work
- Kathakali performance & make-up
- Local ferry travel
- Sunset cruise
- Fascinating street photography
- Lovely Hotels
- Delicious Keralan cookery classes (optional)
- Yoga & Ayurveda treatment/ sessions (optional)

INTRODUCTION

Fort Cochin and the Malabar Coast have long been one of our favourite destinations for photography. Our locations here include include old winding streets crammed with ancient and colourful Portuguese houses, synagogues, palaces and forts all spread over a charming cluster of islands and peninsulas. We explore beautiful and diverse Malabar coastal locations including a variety of iconic Chinese fishing nets. We capture fishermen going about their daily work both on the fishing boats and in the bustling fish markets. A private performance of Kerala's stylised dance Kathakali allows us close contact with the performers both during the intricate make up stage and throughout the dramatic performance. Rickshaws will

take us through narrow bustling streets to make close contact with the local artisans and workers. We will will include spice markets, laundries, sweetie makers, temples and a diverse group of local vendors. In all we will enjoy some immersive and varied street photography experiences. Our seven nights based in just one hotel will allow participants the time and space to relax, focus on their photography with an opportunity to revisit favourite locations. Heading for the Western Ghats we change pace and climate as we leave the Malabar coast by making a magical drive high into Kerala's Cardamon Hills where the air is cool and fresh. We will stay for three nights in a lovely five star spa hotel atop a hill with superb vistas. Our locations here include misty morning



sunrises, spice gardens, coffee and cardamon plantations plus the stunning emerald green tea plantations for which this area is famous. Returning down to the coast we stay for a last night in Fort Cochin. In all, a wonderful combination of the best that Kerala can offer in terms of coastal and mountain photography.

ACTIVITIES ON OFFER

Photography

Kerala and the area around Fort Cochin has long been a favourite of ours for photography. Our locations include, winding streets crammed with ancient Portuguese houses, synagogues, palaces and forts all spread over a charming cluster of Islands and peninsulas. We photograph a variety of Chinese fishing nets, the luscious backwaters from a boat and enjoy a private performance of Kathakali and the intricate make up. We will take rickshaws through the narrow bustling streets making close contact with the local people that work and live here including spice markets, the laundry, fishermen and street vendors all making for some immersive, outstand-

ing and varied photographic opportunities. The environment of the Secret Garden is perfect for working on your images in a relaxed and creative way.

Ayurvedic Wellness

Because of its abundant supply of spices and medicinal plants Kerala is the traditional home of Ayurveda, an ancient, natural healing science that has been practiced in India for over 5000 years. It's based on the belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit. Its main goal is to promote good health rather than fighting disease. Individual sessions are often geared toward specific health problems or just beautifully relaxing massages with traditional oils. We are partnered with Agastya Ayurveda Kalari Massage centre, a unique wellness centre for authentic Keralan Ayurvedic treatments. Three one hour long sessions will be included in the price of this retreat with an option for more to be taken as an optional extra.

Kerala Cookery Classes

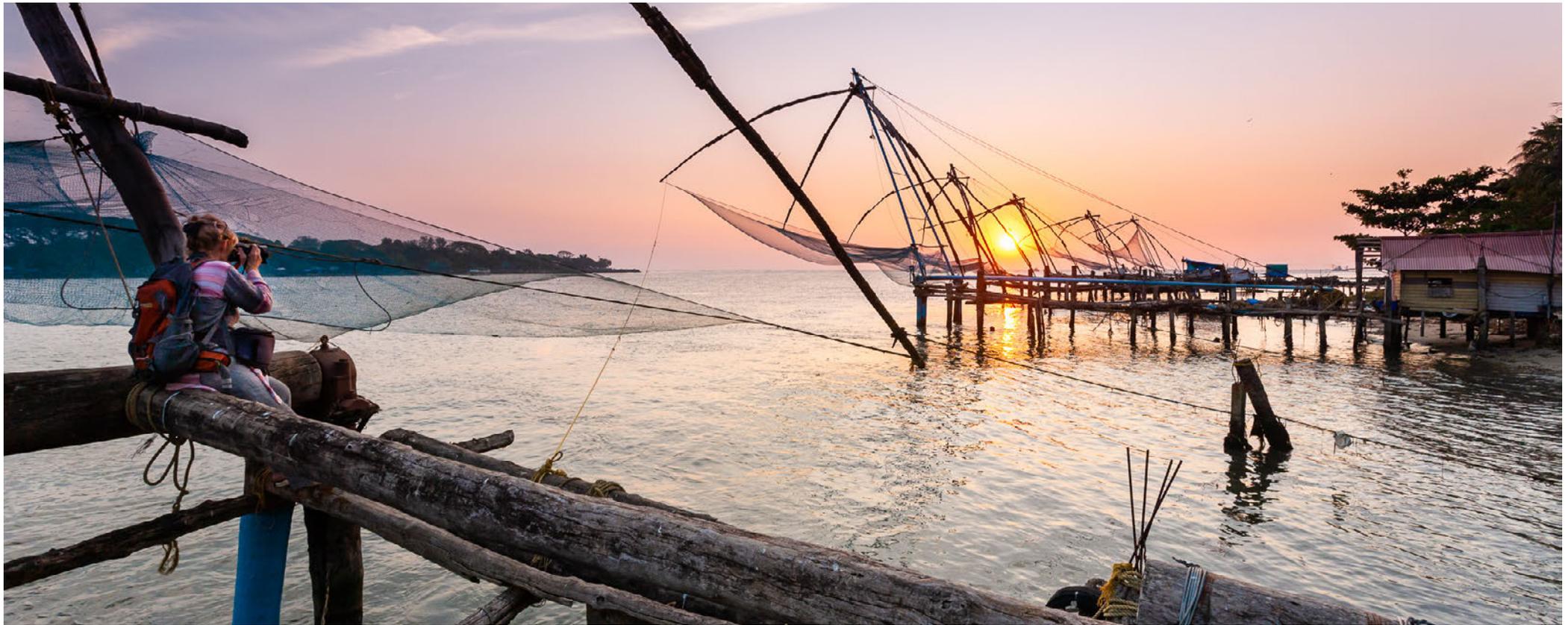
Keralan Cuisine is diverse and very distinct from the rest of India. Long ago the intoxicating aroma of spices lured



traders to Kerala. Greek, Roman, Chinese, Portuguese, Arab and Dutch traders made their way to the port towns of this lush area resulting in a spectacular range of culinary influences. Ranging from brilliant Mappila (Muslim) Biryanis, Sadyas (feasts) served in Hindu households, and the delicious non-vegetarian dishes including the delicious seafood that Fort Cochin is renowned for. Our cookery teacher Neema will guide you through a hands on experience including how to choose the best quality ingredients including spices, vegetables, meat, fish etc. At the end of the class we will sit down together and enjoy the results of our cooking endeavours.

Yoga

Yoga helps to improve health and happiness. It is also a fabulous way to keep bodies supple and strong. Yoga is the Sanskrit word for union. Each morning our Yoga master Raji will facilitate an optional pre breakfast Yoga session. The myriad benefits of yoga including lower blood pressure, increased strength and bone density and reduced anxiety should be enough to get anyone on the



mat. However, many people hesitate to embrace this ancient form of fitness due to some pervasive myths: Yoga is too slow and boring; it's practised in stuffy, incense-filled rooms, or in 90°C heat; it's just for girls and people who are into chanting and, most misguided of all, yoga is only for the flexible. The truth is that there is a class to suit you whatever your body type or temperament. Yoga develops strength and balance as well as flexibility – the latter is a consequence of practising yoga, not a prerequisite. No one has turned up to their first yoga class (unless they were a dancer or a gymnast) able to execute advanced yoga poses. Extra sessions later in the day can

be arranged especially if guests prefer to do the early morning photographic shoot.

COCHIN LOCATIONS & ATTRACTIONS

Chinese Fishing Nets

Also known as Cheenavala, these huge spider like cantilever contraptions are the iconic emblem of Cochin. A complete stretch of the seashore along the Vypeen and Fort Kochi coastline are dotted with these impressive nets which are a legacy from Chinese traders from long ago. These fishing nets are in a great location to photo-

graph the sunset. We will also visit some nets that are off the radar of most tourists.

Fort Cochin Fishermen

There are a huge variety of fishermen and fishing methods to observe and photograph including the bustling four o'clock fish auction alongside the Chinese fishing nets. Colourful fishing boats bring their catch directly to the shore where it is immediately auctioned: some great close up action!



ideas from the Hindu epics. We arrange a private performance in the grounds of the Secret Garden where we will enjoy and photograph the colourful, elaborate make up procedure, intricate costumes and an incredible re-enactment of one of the classic folk stories. We will also enjoy a demonstration and explanation of the different, subtle but fascinating movements and facial expressions.

Keralan Backwaters

The Kerala backwaters are a chain of brackish lagoons and lakes lying parallel to the Arabian Sea commonly known as the Malabar Coast. We will spend the day into sunset in small boats that are able to access the small inlets and villages providing us with a fascinating insight into Keralan life. The backwaters have a unique ecosystem: freshwater from the rivers meets the seawater from the Arabian Sea. Aquatic and bird life is rich including Otters, Turtles, Cormorants, Brahmini Kites, Kingfishers and Darters.



Pardesi Synagogue and Jew Town

The small but enchantingly beautiful over 400 year old Jewish synagogue in Fort Cochin features a small exhibition of paintings describing the role the Jews played in Cochin and beautiful chandeliers and tiling. The synagogue is right in the middle of Jew town and the bustling, colourful old port area, one of the most atmospheric parts of Fort Cochin, many of the old spice warehouses are now shops catering to tourists selling spices, antiques, nic-nacs, colourful shawls and handicrafts although it's still a nice place to wander and a great place to shop for souvenirs.

Kathakali

A private performance: Kerala's famous stylised dance form dates back to the 17th century and is as enchanting as it is unique. It is a "story play" genre of art, but one distinguished by the elaborately colourful make-up, costumes and face make-up that the traditionally male actor-dancers wear. The traditional themes of the Kathakali are folk mythologies, religious legends and spiritual



JOINING ARRANGEMENTS AND TRANSFERS

Participants generally arrive at different times of the day/night as they will book their own flights opting for the best deals available. Participants should fly in and out of Cochin International airport to arrive by 18:00 on 13th September.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All meals
- Hotel 8 nights
- Yoga (7 two hour sessions)
- Ayurvedic Treatment (3 one hour sessions)
- Sunset Cruise
- Backwaters boat excursion
- Keralan Cookery Classes (two included)
- Photography tuition
- English tour guide/co-ordinator
- All entrance fees
- Camera fees except for any video equipment
- Transfers from/to Cochin Int. Airport, Day 1&9

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International Flights
- Travel-/medical Insurance
- Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, snacks between meals
- Tips for local staff
- Indian Visa
- Any spa treatments unless specified above

ACCOMMODATION

The Secret Garden is a lovely, tranquil hotel, just eight rooms all with a very chic but homely feel. The rooms are located around a really lovely pool and are furnished with impeccable taste. We stay in this hotel for 8 nights.

FOOD

This will be cooked locally and of a good standard. We will always take care to eat in establishments that have a high standard of hygiene. Bottled water is always available.

SPENDING MONEY

This always depends on personal spending habits. Prices in India tend to be cheaper than the West, although some things like bottled beers can be similar. £200 should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including approximately £60 for tips for local help/assistance. This amount will allow money for soft drinks and/or beer. If you are intending to buy expensive souvenirs there are cash machines in Fort Cochin. Bulky items can often be shipped by the seller for a small additional cost.



GUIDANCE ON TIPPING

Tipping is an accepted and expected part of Indian culture, although you should only tip for services which are well done. The total amount that you can expect to pay in tips for your teachers, drivers, as well as hotel staff, boatmen etc. is around £60. We will offer advice on tipping.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is recommended that you take out appropriate insurance to cover personal accident, medical costs, repatriation, loss of baggage and holiday cancellation. We will need a copy of your travel insurance at the time of booking.

VACCINATIONS

You should attend your own doctor and dentist for a check-up. Your doctor will have access to the most up to date information on the required vaccinations for India. A very good online resource is the National Health Travelers website at fitfortravel.nhs.uk

PASSPORT & VISAS

A passport (with at least 6 months remaining validity) and a current Indian Visa are required for this trip. Please note that you are required to have a passport with a machine readable bar code. You will need to apply for your Indian Visa in advance, from the relevant issuing authority in your home country. Please contact us for help with filling in the visa form if needed as we know from experience that it can be a bit daunting!



HEALTH

We will have a first aid kit to hand at all times. Please bring your own small personal first aid kit together with any medication for personal use. Hand wash that can be applied without water is always useful for getting rid of germs and removing greasy traces from fingers that will be taking photographs!

Nowadays it is relatively easy to stay healthy and well in India, we will be giving you a full brief in our Day 1 introduction and get-together.

CLIMATE

The climate in Kerala is tropical and often moderated by sea breezes. The most comfortable months are from September to March when daytime temperatures are around 22–30°C. The climate in September will be a mix of sun & cloud, short sharp tropical rainstorms are always a possibility.

CURRENCY

Indian Rupee. Money can be exchanged either at the airport or the first night hotel. There are ATM machines in Cochin.

LANGUAGE

The national language of India is Hindi, although there are around 15 other languages spoken (and listed on some of the bank notes). In Kerala the ancient Dravidian language of 'Malayalam' is spoken. Generally in India many people speak some English and India is therefore an easy place to make friends and get to know local people. We recommend that you take a pocket phrase book and learn some basics such as common greetings. Your efforts to speak a few words of the local language will pay dividends in terms of the warm reaction you receive from the people you meet along the way.

CLOTHING

Generally speaking light cotton clothing allowing freedom of movement will be best suited to the temperatures.



Cotton scarves, a sun hat and good sunglasses will protect from the sun. Very occasionally there may be a tropical rain so a lightweight waterproof jacket should be added, umbrellas are cheap in India as it will not be cool enough for a waterproof jacket. We will sometimes be walking across rough terrain so some quality lightweight walking shoes like trainers are recommended. The temperatures will be suitable for shorts, these will not be appropriate for women to wear in certain areas such as temples. Cheap good quality cotton clothing is readily available in the local shops and bazaars. Please bring something older to wear for Ayurvedic treatments as the oils used are often difficult to remove from clothing. For Yoga ensure that you have light clothes that are easy to move in, shorts, tee shirts, leggings etc are fine. Don't forget the swimwear!

SUN PROTECTION

Temperatures during the day can be high and the sun is especially penetrating at higher altitudes so please ensure that you have some sort of sun protection. Sun Lo-

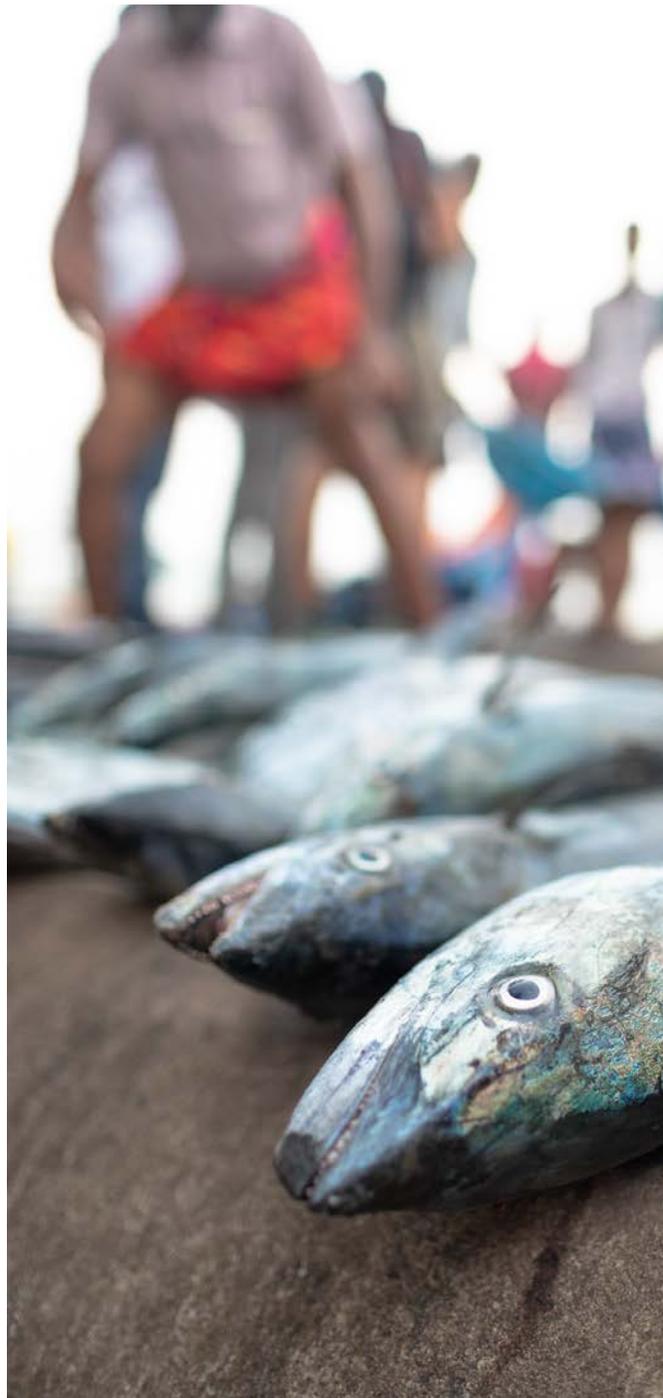
tion with an SPF for UVA & UVB of 15+; good sunglasses with high quality non-tinted lenses and high degree of UV protection.

DAILY ROUTINE

You will need to have adventurous approach in both mind and body. We will be walking in both towns and villages. There will also be opportunities for some early morning rises to make the best of the dawn light, conditions and locations. The variety of activities on this holiday will require some flexibility and the following days programme will always be discussed the night before. The possibility of doing very little is always a viable option.

PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT AND INFORMATION

- Camera bag or backpack such as the Flipside or Trekker series designed by LowePro.
- Any extra equipment that doesn't fit in your camera bag/hand luggage will need to go in a hard case that can be put in the aircraft hold.
- A camera with interchangeable lenses such as a digital SLR or a compact system camera/mirrorless camera.
- A set of lenses to cover a wide range of subjects, ideally a wide-angle zoom, a mid-range (standard) zoom and a tele zoom. For example... for full-frame cameras: 16–35mm wide-angle, 24–105mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom. For crop format cameras: 10–20mm wide-angle, 17–70mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom.
- Fixed, fast lenses for photographing in dark places. For instance a 24 or 35mm f/1.4 and a 85mm f/1.4 (op-



tional)

- Spare camera (required)
- Travel tripod, compact but not flimsy!
- Cable release – mechanical or electronic remote to avoid shake on long exposures.
- Although not essential camera filters such as neutral density, graduated filters and polarisers can be useful. At least one neutral density filter in the range of 4–6 stops would be a good addition to your kit.
- Lens cloth, brush or blower
- Sensor cleaning device (optional)
- Lightweight 'trekking' absorbent towel for drying cameras and equipment.
- Rain cover for camera and camera bag
- Sufficient memory cards for the whole holiday as it may not be possible to buy more during the trip.
- Film users should bring enough film, as it may not be possible to buy in many places.
- A laptop or tablet to download and check images as you go along (optional).
- Backup storage device (optional)
- All electrical sockets are compatible with European two-pin plugs, so you might need a travel plug adapter.

MORE QUESTIONS?

While we hope that this information has answered most of your questions about the holiday, we know it will not give you all the information you need. If you have any more questions, please get in touch. Talking to us on the

phone (we will always call you back) can often be a quick way of sorting out individual questions. It also helps us to get to know each other before the holiday.

BOOKING THIS HOLIDAY

Fill in the [online booking form](#), or give us a call on +44 (0)1270 440222.

LINKS

View [images and information for this tour](#) on the website.

Read about [our approach to teaching photography](#)