

# THREADS OF SOUTH WEST INDIA

A textile journey from Kerala to Goa

05 February – 20 February 2018



## TOUR SNAPSHOT

A captivating journey through south west India, from Kerala's coconut groves and serene back-waters to the idyllic beaches and cultural fusion of Goa. Focusing on the legendary textile traditions of south west India, we will visit embroidery, printing and weaving workshops, local communities and busy markets, we meet skilled artisans, gallery owners and historians. In order to deepen our understanding of India's impressive history and many cultures, we explore the great temple city of Madurai, cosmopolitan Bangalore, the renowned silk city of Mysore, and the evocative ruins of Hampi. Travel in comfort by road, rail and air, stay in some of India's finest heritage accommodation and sample the exotic and varied food sensations of the states we traverse on this memorable journey.

## TOUR LEADER



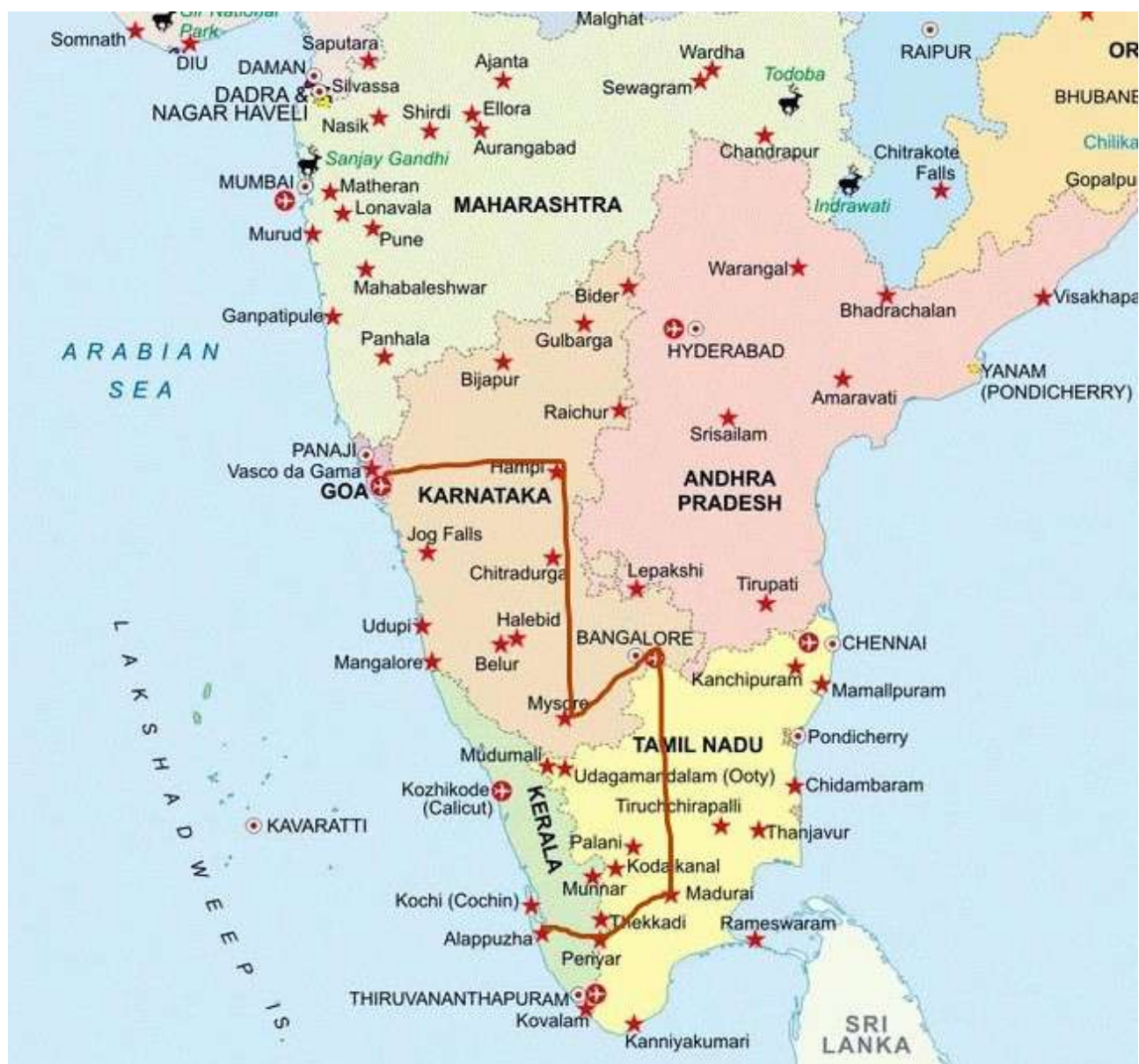
Christina Sumner OAM was principal curator at Sydney's Powerhouse Museum, working with the decorative arts and textile collections for 28 years and curating numerous exhibitions. Christina has a background as a weaver and teacher, with tertiary qualifications in history and archaeology. Her passion for travelling comes a very close second to her lifelong love of textiles. Her research interests focus on the traditional textiles and cultures of India, Central and Southeast Asia about which she has written extensively and lectured widely. Christina now devotes her time to leading small group tours and sharing her passion for textiles worldwide. This is her sixth special interest tour to the Indian subcontinent.

## TOUR PRICE

Twin Share: \$12,645 per person

Single Supplement: \$3080

Earlybird discount - \$250 for deposits received by 31 July 2017



## Itinerary in Brief

Day 1: Mon	05 Feb:	Kochi	Brunton Boat Yard	+91 484 399 0500
Day 2: Tue	06 Feb:	Kochi	Brunton Boat Yard	
Day 3: Wed	07 Feb	Kumarakom	Kumarakom Lake Resort	+91 481 252 4900
Day 4: Thu	08 Feb	Kumarakom	Kumarakom Lake Resort	
Day 5: Fri	09 Feb	Periyar	Spice Village	+91 486 930 2555
Day 6: Sat	10 Feb	Madurai	Heritage Villas	+91 452 238 5451
Day 7: Sun	11 Feb	Madurai	Heritage Villas	
Day 8 Mon	12 Feb	Bangalore	The Oberoi Bengalaru	+91 802 558 5858
Day 9: Tue	13 Feb	Mysore	Radisson Blu Plaza	+91 821 710 1234
Day 10: Wed	14 Feb	Overnight train to Hospet		
Day 11: Thu	15 Feb	Hampi	Orange County Suites	+91 839 429 4700
Day 12: Fri	16 Feb	Hampi	Orange County Suites	
Day 13 Sat	17 Feb	Goa	Ahilya by the Sea	+91 114 155 1575
Day 14 Sun	18 Feb	Goa	Ahilya by the Sea	
Day 15 Mon	19 Feb	Goa	Ahilya by the Sea	
Day 16 Tue	20 Feb	Departure Day		

# TOUR ITINERARY

## Day 1: Monday 5 February - Arrive Kochi

On arrival in Kochi in the late evening, an Inspiration India representative will meet us and transfer us to the hotel for check in. (SQ/MI 5368 arrives at 21.55)

**Overnight: Brunton Boat Yard, Standard Room**

<http://www.cghearth.com/brunton-boatyard>



## Day 2: Tuesday 06 February - Kochi

**KOCHI**, also known as Cochin, is a modern port city on the Malabar Coast of lush green Kerala in southwest India. Once a princely state that beckoned travellers from afar, Kochi is also sometimes known as 'The Queen of the Arabian Sea'. Kochi today is a fascinating potpourri of its rich trading history and modern economic activity. Over time, Jewish, Portuguese, British and Dutch merchants created a unique mix of their cultures and religions, thus reflecting one of India's most fascinating characteristics, its cultural plurality.

After breakfast, start exploring Kochi through a heritage walking tour, during which we see the inimitable and photogenic Chinese fishing nets strung up along the shore. Sightseeing of this historic town includes a visit to Mattancherry Dutch



Palace, built by the Portuguese in the 1550s and later renovated by the Dutch. Visit St Francis Church, where Vasco Da Gama is buried, and Jew Town site of the ancient and beautiful Cochin Synagogue, one of India's oldest. Built in 1568, it

features a floor made entirely of hand-painted blue and white Chinese tiles, so precious that shoes must be removed before entering.

Close to the Synagogue, there is a unique embroidery workshop showcasing one of the dwindling arts of the world. This organization employs 168 women, the wives and widows of fishermen who embroider the smallest petit point (needlepoint) known on Venetian lace, an art brought to Kerala by Portuguese missionaries in the 17th century.

After lunch in a local restaurant, explore Jew Town's excellent shops where antiques, textiles, clothing and souvenirs are sold. For clothes shopping, Cinnamon and Fabindia are recommended while Crafters is great for antiques. Non-shoppers might like to visit the Kerala Folklore Theatre and Museum, which houses an excellent collection of musical instruments, costumes and masks. In the evening, attend a traditional Kathakali performance, arriving early, at 5pm, to watch the artists putting on their extraordinarily elaborate makeup.



**KATHAKALI** is Kerala's most popular dance drama. Evolving over the last 400 years, this classical dance demands rigorous training to attain body control and emotional sensitivity in order to render all its facial expressions and hand gestures. Principal themes come from the two great Indian epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

**Overnight: Brunton Boat Yard**

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Welcome Dinner at the hotel



### Day 3: Wednesday 07 February - Kumarakom

After breakfast, drive to Kumarakom (about 2.5 hours) via the coir factory in Cherthala. Gigantic wooden looms, operated by both men and women, are used to process the coir (from coconut palms). On show are their well-matted and expertly-designed coir carpets. After check in at Kumarakom, the rest of the day is at leisure.



**KUMARAKOM** is a serenely beautiful backwater destination, a peninsula that projects into the great Vembanad Lake, one of the largest in India. The Lake is fed by an intricate network of canals and together they comprise part of Kerala's unique backwaters.

#### Overnight: Kumarakom Lake Resort

Heritage Villas with private pool

[www.kumarakomlakeresort.in](http://www.kumarakomlakeresort.in)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

### Day 4: Thursday 08 February - Backwaters Cruise

After breakfast, embark on a kettuvellam (traditional houseboat) for a relaxing cruise on the beautiful Kerala backwaters. Lunch and afternoon tea are served on the boat before returning to our hotel.



The **KERALA BACKWATERS** is an extensive network of waterways that are home to a rural community in

which water and land share equal importance. A cruise on the backwaters on a kettuvellam is supremely relaxing and the scenery delightful. Float gently through water hyacinth, viewing village life up close on the nearby riverbanks, passing duck farms and pastel-coloured churches. Christianity dates back to the 1st century CE in Kerala as according to legend St Thomas visited here shortly after the death of Jesus Christ.

#### Overnight: Kumarakom Lake Resort

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

### Day 5: Friday 9 February - Kumarakom to Periyar

After breakfast, drive eastwards (about 4.5 hours) to Periyar National Park, one of South India's most renowned national parks, and the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, to stay overnight. This beautiful area is home to wandering tribes of wild elephant, boar, and deer. Lunch on arrival and in the afternoon, take a half hour elephant ride to a nearby spice plantation to see the origins of such plants and trees as cardamom, cinnamon, pepper, nutmeg, vanilla



and coffee. Visit a cardamom grading and processing centre and purchase spices if you wish.

#### Overnight: Spice Village (Standard Bungalows)

<http://www.cghearth.com/spice-village>

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

### Day 6: Saturday 10 February - Periyar to Madurai

Leaving Periyar and Kerala behind, cross into Tamil Nadu and head for the ancient city of Madurai (about 5 hours). En route stop in Theni to visit the Blue Mango Trust NGO, a social enterprise run by Tamar Dejong and her husband.

**BLUE MANGO's** objective is to establish sustainable businesses run by and for marginalized Tamil Nadu women who are disabled, deserted, widowed or living with AIDS. The trust enables the women to gain financial self-sufficiency, hoping those

stigmatized will find greater respect and support in their wider communities. Drive on to Madurai and check in.

**Overnight: Heritage Madurai (Luxury Villas)**

[www.heritagemadurai.com/](http://www.heritagemadurai.com/)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**MADURAI**, situated on the banks of the River Vaigai, is one of the oldest cities in South Asia and a rich storehouse of Tamil culture. The city's principal sights are the Meenakshi Amman Temple and Tirumalai Nayak Palace and there are vast markets, a cultural centre showcasing Tamil arts, and the impressive Gandhi Museum. You will meet some of Madurai's superb weavers.

**Day 7: Sunday 11 February - Madurai**



An early morning visit to the Madurai flower market; internationally famous for jasmine and roses which are used extensively in perfume production. After breakfast at the hotel we depart for Kaithari Nagar where jacquard weavers produce excellent quality silk and cotton saris. Madurai is a mecca for textile lovers, with its characteristic fine gold-edged muslins and printed or resist-dyed



medium-weight saris popularly referred to as Madurai Sungudi, Veeravanallur and Koranadu saris. A project called Nool, meaning thread, produces very fine cotton Saris, handwoven by Madurai's Saurashtra-speaking artisans. After lunch at the hotel, we visit Madurai's two 'must sees', the Thirumalai Nayak Palace and Sri Meenakshi Amman Temple.

**THIRUMALAI NAYAK PALACE** was built in 1636 CE and represents a classic fusion of Dravidian and Rajput styles. The original palace complex, where the king lived, was four times larger than the building we can see today. In its heyday, the Palace was considered one of the wonders of South India.



**SRI MEENAKSHI AMMAN TEMPLE** is dedicated to the Hindu goddess Parvati, or Meenakshi and her consort Shiva, known here as Sundareswarar. Considered the heart of ancient Madurai, this huge Temple was built at the same time as the Taj Mahal and is an outstanding example of South Indian Hindu architecture, with its nine towering gopurams smothered in a riot of colourful stucco.

This is a perfect place to absorb the atmosphere of Hinduism: the dark pillared halls filled with thousands of pilgrims, bare-chested priests conducting ceremonies, a temple elephant giving blessings, and the pervading scent of flowers, ghee and coconut. 15,000 people visit the Temple daily and 25,000 on Fridays; with an estimated 33,000 sculptures, it was among the top 30 nominees for the 'New Seven Wonders of the World' list.

**Overnight: Heritage Madurai**

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Day 8: Monday 12 February—Madurai - Bangalore**

After breakfast this morning fly from Madurai to Bangalore, in Karnataka with Jet Airways.

**9W 2362**

**Depart: 11.20 Arrive: 12.50**

On arrival in Bangalore, check into the hotel. After lunch (not included), visit **AMBARA**, the brainchild of creative collaborators Jaya Mani and Shashiv Chandran, who have spent decades working with a range of traditional artisans. Meet with Jaya Mani who will introduce us to contemporary designers working with weavers, embroiderers and printers. Dine this evening at a local restaurant with Jaya Mani and the designers.

**JAYA MANI** is involved in the promotion of old South Indian art and is an expert in her field. She consults on art restoration and evaluation, and has curated numerous successful art shows in India and overseas. Her focus has now shifted to promoting South Indian artists who produce contemporary art works inspired by their traditional moorings.

**AMBARA** showcases a wide range of arts, home accessories and vintage furniture - all essentially Indian but adapted to contemporary aesthetics. The store is housed in a heritage Art Deco home overlooking Ulsoor Lake with a garden run by India's leading horticultural company, Indo American Hybrid Seeds. Colourful exotic plants and perennials create a picturesque setting for the Cafe Cerrise.

**Overnight: The Oberoi Bengaluru (Luxury Room)**

<http://www.oberoihotels.com/hotels-in-bengaluru/gallery>

Meals: Breakfast & Dinner

**Day 9: Tuesday 13 February- Bangalore - Mysore**

Today leave Bangalore to drive southwest to Mysore (about 3 hours), taking a packed lunch. En route stop at Ramnagar, whose thriving sericulture industry makes it the largest silk cocoon market in Asia. There are many houses where traditional cocooning units can be seen. Silk from Ramnagar provides the raw material for Mysore's world-renowned silk saris.

**RAMNAGAR** and the surrounding areas are also famous for their rugged granite hills which have provided the backdrop for several movies, including Bollywood's famous 'Sholay' and 'A Passage to India'.



**SRIRANGAPATNAM** is located on an island not far from Mysore. Formerly known as Seringapatam and the historic capital of **TIPU SULTAN**, known for his courageous and suicidal stand against British East India Company rule. A British assault against the fortress involved two armies and culminated in the capture of the city and the death of Tipu Sultan on 4 May 1799. Major Lachlan Macquarie, governor of



New South Wales in early 1800, was encamped nearby and although not involved in the assault he provided an eye-witness account. Monuments relating to Tipu Sultan and this famous battle are dotted across the island. On arrival in Mysore, check into the hotel and have a short rest. Dine tonight at the beautiful home of a local Coorgi family and experience a traditional Kodava meal. Listen to stories about Mysore and its eventful history from our hosts.

**Overnight: Radisson Blu Plaza (Superior Room)**

[www.radissonblue.com/en/hotel-mysore](http://www.radissonblue.com/en/hotel-mysore)

Meals: Breakfast, Packed Lunch & Dinner

**Day 10: Wednesday 14 February Mysore – Hospet**

Spend the day exploring Mysore, a city of palaces, temples and colonial buildings built by Tipu Sultan in the late 18th century upon the levelled remains of an earlier city. Also renowned as a silk producer, the Mysore district produces 70% of India's mulberry silk. Join the 'Heart of Mysore' walk that includes the Indo-Saracenic Clock Tower, the magnificent late 19th century Amba Vilas Palace and the Jaganmohan Palace. The architecture of these palaces is a mix of Greco-Roman, Hoysala (11th to 14th century South Indian), Indo-Saracenic and European styles. Continue through the vibrant





Devaraja Market where we can immerse ourselves in the dizzying scents of musk, jasmine, frangipani and sandalwood, for which Mysore is also famous. At the Government Silk Factory, meet designers and weavers and see fabulous saris in the making. See the finest gold threads intricately incorporated into the weave to create the dazzling borders that give Mysore saris their characteristic identity. The silk saris are believed to be the only ones with gold woven into them, and credit for their beauty must go to the craftsmen who produce them. Looms and other machinery used in the past are displayed in the factory, which also doubles as a retail outlet.



**MYSORE's** silk industry is thought to have begun in the late 18th century under the patronage of Tipu Sultan, and for years Mysore reigned supreme in the world of fine silks. The industry was badly hit by the global recession and also suffered from competition with imported silks and rayons. It fought to keep its great traditions alive and has happily regained its earlier glory. Today Mysore is India's largest producer of silk.

In the early evening, transfer from the hotel to the Mysore railway station to board our overnight train to Hospet in Central Karnataka, taking a packed dinner with us.

#### **Hampi Express from Mysore – Hospet**

Departs: 6.00pm, arrives 7.00am next day

#### **Overnight: On board the train**

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Packed Dinner

#### **Day 11: Thursday 15 February - Hampi**

Arrive at Hospet railway station in the early morning. The hotel is a short drive away, situated close to the great UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hampi. After breakfast, set out to explore these evocative ruins.

**HAMPI**, the largest complex of ruins in India, was the capital of one of India's most formidable



empires, the powerful Vijayanagara, whose rule stretched from the Arabian Sea to the Indian Ocean and lasted over 300 years, from the early 14th to mid-17th century. At its height, this splendid city was home to half a million people and protected by more than a million soldiers. With its great fortifications, temples, stables, royal apartments and palaces, the scale and magnificence of Hampi are particularly impressive. The city's surviving monuments can be divided into Religious, Civil and Military buildings. Some of these, such as the Jain temples and several other structures, predate the Vijayanagara Empire; the earliest are the Shiva shrines with their stepped superstructures that date back to around the 9th century CE. The backdrop to Hampi is the boulder-strewn landscape of Karnataka's vast hinterland, whose remoteness emphasises its remarkable charm; the site is also a popular Bollywood location.

#### **Overnight: Orange County, Suites**

[www.orangecounty.in/hampi/suites](http://www.orangecounty.in/hampi/suites)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

#### **Day 12: Friday 16 February – Hampi**

After breakfast this morning, drive to a nearby village to meet some of the local Lambani (Banjara) women and see their colourful traditional embroidery. In the afternoon, we have time to explore more of magnificent Hampi.

The **LAMBANI** or Banjara are a semi-nomadic people who came from Rajasthan originally and now live in central and southern India. Many Lambani now live in isolated groups on the fringes of towns and the women still wear their brightly coloured and heavily embroidered traditional dress. Lambani embroidery is a unique



blend of mirror work, shells, coins and a range of stitches including feather and blanket, much of it on a red or blue ground. While the women are primarily engaged in embroidering dresses for themselves and their daughters, their work is also reaching a wider and appreciative market as bags, blankets and cushion covers.

**Overnight: Orange County, Suites**

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Day 13: Saturday 17 February - Hampi - Goa**

After breakfast, leave Hampi and drive to the tiny coastal state of Goa, on the border between Karnataka and Maharashtra (about 7 hours). Stop for lunch on the way and, on arrival in Goa, check into the hotel and have dinner.

**Overnight: Ahilya by the Sea**

<https://www.ahilyabythesea.com>

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch en-route & Dinner

GOA was a Portuguese colony from 1510 until it became part of the Indian Union in 1961. A distinct culture reflects this colonial past with 400 years of Portuguese rule evident in the architecture and in people's dress, language, religion, cuisine and music. Comprising a narrow strip of coastline where its legendary beaches give way gradually to emerald green rice paddies, Goa is today among the world's best known travel destinations.

**Day 14: Sunday 18 February - Goa**

Panjim (or Panaji), the capital of Goa, is best seen on foot and we explore it on a morning walk. Our local guide shares with us his expert knowledge of



Goa's colonial history and Panjim's lanes and footpaths. Visit the captivating Mala Fontainhas district, with its narrow roads, old Hindu architecture and Portuguese-style houses. Make a mid-morning stop for pastries at Panjim's oldest family-run bakery. Walk past the colonial buildings at Sao Tome to the banks of the River Mandovi, from where a short walk brings us to Panjim's most

important landmark, the Church of our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. Lunch today is at our own expense at a local restaurant. Afterwards a short tuk-tuk ride takes us to Maquinez Palace, a lovely neoclassical building of the early 18th century. An old Romanesque bridge leads to the local market, a riot of colour and activity.



Subject to their availability in February next year, Dr George Michell and Dr John Fritz, the principal archaeologists of Hampi, join us for dinner tonight.

**Overnight: Ahilya by the Sea**

Meals: Breakfast

**Day 15: Monday 19 February - Goa**

Today visit the mid 16th century Portuguese fort of Reis Magos, on the coast a short distance from Panjim. Also visit the early 17th century Basilica of Bom Jesus, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that contains the tomb of St Francis Xavier who died in 1552, and the great 'Se' Cathedral. Alternatively you may wish to visit galleries, including the State Museum, the Houses of Goa Museum or the Gallery Gitanjali.

**Overnight: Ahilya by the Sea**

Meals: Breakfast & Farewell Dinner

**Day 16: Tuesday 20 February - Depart Goa**

A free morning to visit one of Goa's many early morning markets, a gallery or two, indulge in some last minute shopping or have a quiet morning at leisure at the hotel.

Group transfer at 1.30pm to the airport to board the flight to Mumbai.

**Goa to Mumbai - Jet Airways**

9W 2385 Depart: 16.40 Arrival: 17.55

On arrival in Mumbai you will be met and transferred to the international airport to connect to onward flights.



# Booking Conditions

To secure a booking in this tour we require:

A non-refundable deposit of \$1,750 per person

A completed and signed booking form per person

A scan of your passport (passports must have a validity of 6 months beyond the date of return to Australia)

## Balance Payments and Cancellation:

The balance payment is required on Monday 27 November 2017

No refunds can be made after final payment

NB: Visa and Mastercard are accepted without surcharge. Add 3% for payment by Amex

NB: Prices are subject to change by Inspiration India and Travel on Q due to circumstances beyond our control

Full booking conditions are to be found on the Booking Form

## Inclusions:

Accommodation for 15 nights on twin share or single basis, inclusive of breakfast, tax and portage

Included meals: 11 lunches, 13 dinners

Domestic airfares – Madurai / Bangalore & Goa / Mumbai in economy class

Transportation by mini-coach with bottled water on board

Local English-speaking destination guides

Escorted by an Inspiration India representative throughout

Escorted by Christina Sumner OAM (textile expert)

All entrance fees

Tips to drivers and guides

A donation to Artisans of Fashion in support of a local initiative

## Exclusions:

International airfares

Travel Insurance

Indian Visa

All drinks and meals other than those mentioned above

Camera and video fees at public monuments

Any tours or excursions not specifically included in the itinerary

Items of a personal nature, laundry, phone and internet fees not included at hotels



**[www.travelonQ.com.au](http://www.travelonQ.com.au)**

Level 1 / 128 Crown Street, Darlinghurst

NSW, Australia, 2010

Phone: +61 (02) 9357 6800 FAX: (02) 9357 6900

ATAS: A10482 / ABN 40 059 566 184 / IATA 02-3-4302-5

**email: [travel@travelonQ.com.au](mailto:travel@travelonQ.com.au)**