



retreat | recreate

South India Textiles & Handcrafts tour: 22 February – 9 March 2027

Trip Notes as at May 2026

Namaste! Welcome to our 2027 South India tour featuring the region's superb textile arts and handcrafts of within the deeper context of its rich cultural heritage, history, art, and architecture.

This tour will be accompanied by retreat|recreate host, Susan Keeble. Our local, accredited, English-speaking tour leader will be confirmed closer to departure.

These Trip Notes function as your FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) companion. **Please carefully and thoroughly read the entire Trip Notes.** The Trip Notes should be read in conjunction with the tour itinerary.

Click on the links below to locate specific information:

[Itinerary disclaimer](#)

[Is this trip suitable for you?](#)

[Health, fitness and mobility](#)

[Included and optional activities](#)

[Pre and post-tour activities](#)

[Accommodation](#)

[Twin rooms](#)

[Solo travellers and room sharing](#)

[Pre and post-tour accommodation](#)

[Flights](#)

[Airport transfers \(arrival and departure\)](#)

[Transport](#)

[Meals](#)

[Water](#)

[Toilets](#)

[Workshops and hands-on activities](#)

[Safety](#)

[Travel insurance](#)

[Passports, visas and arrival cards](#)

[Money - tipping, tip kitty, spending, commissions etc](#)

[Phone and internet](#)

[Group leader and host](#)

[Weather and climate](#)

[What to bring](#)

[Emergencies and other issues](#)

[A couple of rules](#)

[Responsible travel](#)

[Travelling on a group trip](#)

Itinerary disclaimer

Some changes to the itinerary may occur due to inclement weather, timetable changes or circumstances beyond our control. While we do our best to prevent this from happening, it may be unavoidable. It can also happen with little notice, so please bear with us if we have to make modifications to the itinerary.

Please note: this itinerary was developed many months prior to departure. Accordingly, we may make slight amendments depending on the planned activities and venues as they are confirmed closer to departure or if any of our activities need to change days or dates. We'll always let you know of any proposed changes to this itinerary.

Is this trip suitable for you?

You don't need to be an artist or experienced textile or handcraft practitioner; an interest in and appreciation for the art of hand-made is sufficient. If you're a fit, active traveller (see fitness requirements below) who is curious about the world, you are courteous and respectful of local etiquette, traditions, beliefs and customs, you understand the importance of being a generous and tolerant group member, and you value socially responsible travel, this is the trip for you!

Health, fitness and mobility

- Please carefully and realistically consider your mobility and health when determining if this trip is right for you.
- All travellers need to be in good physical health and have good fitness and mobility to participate fully on this trip.
- This trip is not for you if your health, fitness and mobility are compromised or you use mobility aids.
- All travellers are required to submit a **Fitness to Travel declaration** together with their Booking Application form, to ensure all travellers are physically suited to our tours. We reserve the right to decline an application if we deem your fitness or mobility levels to be detrimental to your own and others' satisfactory participation in the tour. The specific physical requirements for this tour are outlined on the **Fitness to Travel declaration** and below:

All participants must be able to:

- Navigate arrival and departure airports without personal assistance
- Manage their own luggage for short distances
- Embark and disembark coaches, jeeps, rickshaws and a houseboat without assistance
- Manage flights of stairs at a moderate pace without assistance. Not all of our hotels have elevators. Ground floor rooms are not always available and/or cannot be guaranteed. Some sightseeing locations (eg. forts and stepwells) also have flights of stairs
- Undertake walking tours including walking on uneven and hilly terrain
- Be on your feet for several hours at a time
- Stand for extended periods of time in galleries and museums
- Walk at a moderate pace and keep up with the guide and group
- Cope with warm to hot and sometimes humid weather
- Use squat toilets as western toilets are not always available in the villages we visit and road-side stops
- Use shower over bath facilities, as walk-in showers cannot be guaranteed
- Sit on the floor or a low stool for some workshops
- Cope with some long travel days and some consecutive travel days. Most travel on this trip is in a private air-conditioned coach. Regular stops will be made for bathrooms, meals, sightseeing and photographic opportunities
- Be prepared for some travel on rural roads. Some of the roads we encounter may not be maintained in as good condition as those you're used to at home, others don't have concrete/bitumen and some maybe be bumpy and/or dusty.
- Be patient as distances are not necessarily indicative of travel times, road conditions can slow us down and travel can sometimes take longer than expected.
- Be able to satisfactorily and energetically participate in the full tour program as described

Our itinerary offers a range of immersive experiences. Some experiences are not readily available to the average tourist and we will occasionally venture off the standard tourist trail. While this is not an adventure tour, a 'sense of adventure' is required. Please note the following:

- The minimum age is 18 years at the time of travel
- If you are prone to motion sickness, you should consider how you might manage this eg. sitting by a window, using motion sickness bracelets, ginger tablets, Kwell tablets and Travacalm tablets.
- You must carry your own personal first aid kit at all times - it's of no use to you in your hotel room. Your medical kit should contain paracetamol, bandaids, anti-nausea pills, hydration salts, Imodium tablets, RAT tests, masks etc in addition to any personal medications or other requirements (eg spare prescription spectacles). For legal reasons the

retreat|recreate host and tour leader are prohibited from dispensing any type of drugs including antibiotics and headache tablets. Please purchase adequate quantities of all personal and travel medications before you leave home as suitable substitutes are not always available outside your home country. Please ensure that you are personally and adequately prepared.

- retreat|recreate is able to provide only general advice on mandatory health requirements. We are not medical experts. It is your responsibility to consult your doctor or travel health expert at least two months prior to departure for up-to-date medical information and for the latest health, vaccination, anti-malarial requirements and other recommendations for your destination.
- While vaccinations such as hepatitis A and typhoid will apply to most travellers, vaccines such as hepatitis B, rabies, meningitis and cholera may also be recommended by your medical professional. As some vaccines require more than one dose, be sure to arrange your medical appointment at least two months before travel. TMVC clinics are recommended for travellers from Australia and New Zealand. www.traveldoctor.com.au
- We strongly recommend all travellers are up to date with their routine vaccinations and recommended Covid-19, flu and tetanus vaccination schedule.
- Carry a copy (digital or hard copy) of your vaccination record with you as you travel
- We ask all travellers to monitor their health throughout the trip and report any symptoms of any illness to the host and/or guide immediately.
- If you feel unwell or exhibit flu, cold or Covid-like symptoms while on tour, you will be required to immediately take precautionary measures to reduce the risk of transmission, including wearing a mask.
- Mosquito-borne illnesses such as Malaria, dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis etc occur in some parts of India in some seasons.
 - Take preventative measures such as using repellent, wearing long clothing and being indoors particularly around dusk and dawn.
 - Consult a medical professional regarding recommended prophylaxis against malaria according to the itinerary and season of travel.
- Air pollution in some parts of India can at times spike to hazardous levels. If you suffer from asthma or other respiratory conditions, please carry your medication with you at all times. Those with pre-existing medical conditions, particularly heart and lung conditions, may be especially affected and should consult a medical professional for advice on whether they should travel to India. All travellers are encouraged to pack face masks as a precaution. Pollution index levels for the main Indian cities can be checked at: <http://safar.tropmet.res.in/>

Included and optional activities

- Included activities are those specifically listed in the itinerary.
- None of the activities on the itinerary are compulsory. However, if you wish to take time off from the scheduled itinerary, the cost of those activities will not be refunded. Of course, we hope you'll enjoy and participate in the whole itinerary.
- Activities marked as optional and activities not outlined in the itinerary are at an additional cost and undertaken at your own discretion and risk. Please use your own good judgement when selecting an optional activity or an activity in your free time.

Pre-tour and post-tour optional activities

- While some general tourist activities are included in our itinerary, we can't include everything. To this end we offer our India travellers a small selection of optional pre/post-tour programs (at additional cost). You are of course welcome to plan and arrange your own pre/post tour activities such as cooking classes, gallery and museum visits, forts, temples etc.
- A list of suggestions for pre/post-tour activities will be provided to participants closer to departure.

Accommodation

- Accommodation is on a twin share basis. The single supplement is applicable if you'd prefer your own room.
- We aim to provide an authentic, memorable and insightful experience of the incredible places we visit as well as an insight into India's colourful history, elegant architecture and diverse culture. Accordingly, we stay at carefully selected boutique and heritage accommodation where possible plus one night on a houseboat.
- Heritage hotels are a highlight of this trip and wonderful way to experience Indian hospitality. Please be aware that each room is unique, bathrooms have often been retrofitted, some rooms are bigger than others or have different views, outlooks and configurations and we may occasionally be allocated some rooms without windows. These properties are different from a standard hotel and may not have all mod cons such as elevators and televisions.
- Our accommodation venues are ranked at 3, 4 and 5 stars by Trip Advisor - more than comfortable, but please don't expect 5+ star luxury.
- All rooms at our accommodation venues have ensuite bathrooms. Some have swimming pools.
- The names of our hotels will be provided to participants closer to departure.
- On rare occasions, alternative arrangements may need to be made due to circumstances beyond our control. A similar standard of accommodation will be arranged in these instances.

Twin rooms

- Generally consist of two single beds, although in some instances may comprise a double bed and a single bed.

- Occasionally, if twin rooms are unavailable upon check-in, a Hollywood twin (a double/queen bed + extra mattress or foldable bed) may be offered, subject to the hotel's extra bed policy.
- Should the demand for twin rooms exceed availability at any of our tour hotels, some/all twin share guests (starting with those who booked last) may need to stay in single rooms at those hotels. In this case, a pro rata single supplement will apply to those nights. Please be assured that we will do our best to accommodate all room requests where possible.

Solo travellers and room sharing

- Solo travellers may elect to share a twin room for the duration of the tour and we will do our best to pair you up with another solo traveller. Note however that if an uneven number of solo guests book this tour, the last to book will need to pay the single supplement.
- If you are considering sharing a twin room, please consider whether you will be able to cope with another person's potential snoring or different understanding of personal space and quiet.
- **Please be brutally honest with yourself about your capacity to share a room as well as your suitability as a roommate.**
- Be sure to read our tips for successful room sharing at www.retreatrecreate.com/room-sharing-tips-and-suggestions/
- Unless twin share travellers book together, we'll rotate our solo twin share guests each time we move hotels so they each have the opportunity to share with each other.

Pre-tour and post-tour accommodation

- We strongly recommend that you extend your stay both before and after the tour to allow time for recovery from flights, different time zones and to explore independently.
- Pre-tour accommodation in Chennai and post tour accommodation in Kochi may be booked through us prior to departure, at additional cost (subject to availability). Further information will be provided to confirmed travellers.
- Check in time at our starting point hotel in Chennai is 14:00 hours. If you arrive before 14:00 hrs and your room isn't ready, hotel reception staff can assist with storing your luggage.
- Check out time at our finishing point hotel in Kochi is 11:00pm. If your flight departs later in the day, hotel reception staff can assist with storing your luggage until your departure.
- Should you require early check-in at our starting point hotel on your day of arrival or late check-out at our finishing point hotel on your day of departure, additional charges will apply.
- You're welcome to arrange your own pre/post-tour accommodation. Options include using your preferred travel agent, Airbnb or online sites such as www.booking.com
- Note: If you book pre-tour accommodation at a hotel other than our starting point hotel, your arrival

transfer may not be included. Please check with us before making your booking if an arrival transfer is important to you.

- If you choose to stay elsewhere before the tour, you will need to make your own way (at your own cost) from your chosen accommodation to our tour hotel in time for our 6pm welcome meeting on day 1 of our tour.

Flights

- Flights to and from India are not included in the trip price. Please don't book flights until you've received confirmation that you have a place on the tour, have paid your deposit and received confirmation that the trip is confirmed to proceed. Information on booking flights and a Travel Details Form will be forwarded for completion once we have our minimum group size.
- **Arrival flights should arrive at Chennai Airport (MAA) no later than midday on 22 February 2027.** We strongly recommend that you arrive at least a day or two in advance to allow for possible flight delays and recovery from travelling from a different time zone or on an overnight flight.
- **Please be sure your plans for 22 February allow you to be on time for our 6pm welcome briefing meeting.**
- **Departure flights should depart from Kochi Airport (COK).** Our tour finishes after breakfast on 9 March 2027. You are welcome to depart at any time.
- To enter any airport in India, you must present your passport and a copy of your flight ticket.
- If you are not confident booking your own flights or buying travel insurance online, you may wish to seek advice and assistance from your preferred travel agent

Airport Transfers

- Your arrival airport transfer in Chennai **IS included** in the tour cost. Details of your arrival transfer will be provided closer to departure. Chennai Airport (MAA) is approximately 14km and a 30-40 minute drive from our starting point hotel, depending on the traffic conditions.
- Departure airport transfers in Kochi are **NOT included** in your trip cost. We can assist you with pre-booking a pre-paid departure transfer. Indicate your request on your Travel Details Form. Alternatively, you are welcome to arrange your own departure transfer – our finishing point hotel's reception team can assist you with this if required.
- NOTE: Any unused pre-paid arrival and departure transfers are non-refundable.

Transport

- Most of the travel on this tour will be by private air-conditioned coach, but will also include short trips in jeeps, auto or manual rickshaws plus an afternoon and overnight on a houseboat.
- Main roads in India are usually very busy with an assortment of vehicles from the biggest trucks (which always have right of way) down to bikes (and cows, goats, chickens and dogs). The use of the horn is a form of communication between drivers.

- The drivers engaged by our tour operator are experienced and well trained. Our leaders have complete authority to remove groups from local transport if the driver is not driving safely. If you are uncomfortable with your driver, please always let your tour leader know in the first instance.
- Please always wear a seatbelt where available.
- Please be prepared for some long travel days, sometimes over consecutive days. Regular stops will be made for meals, bathrooms, sightseeing and photos
- Be prepared with your own music, podcasts, small handcraft project or reading material etc
- Distances in India do not reflect the driving time.
- Patience and a sense of humour are required.
- Meal breaks may sometimes be delayed, depending on our location and the availability of suitable restaurants. A small range of snacks will be provided on our private coach, however we recommend that you carry your own additional preferred snacks.

Meals

- In India, food is a way of life. You can snack for a bargain or dine in the finest restaurants.
- Please refer to the itinerary document for details of included meals.
- Some lunches and dinners are not included in the tour price, giving guests the flexibility to set their own budget. However, we will frequently eat together as a group at lunchtime, as we move from our morning activity to an afternoon activity.
- Our local tour leader will be able to direct you toward restaurants that have appropriate hygiene standards and suit your dietary requirements.
- Our tour leader will endeavour to cater for specific dietary requirements, however we recommend that you carry extra snacks in case suitable options are limited.
- If you suffer from particular food allergies, our local tour leader will endeavour to disclose to their fullest knowledge the main ingredients in dishes being consumed. However, it is your personal responsibility to ensure that you do not ingest any foods to which you are allergic.
- Vegetarians and vegans are well catered for in India. Most restaurants offer a good range of vegetarian and vegan options.

Tips to help you stay well when eating in India include:

- Stick to restaurants and street stalls that are busy with locals
- Wash your hands before eating (most restaurants will have a hand-basin or bathroom) or carry and use a sanitising hand gel.
- Give yourself a few days to get used to local food, especially spicy food
- If in doubt, stick to vegetarian food
- Avoid salads and peel fruit to avoid eating anything that may be washed in local water
- Fresh lime and soda is a refreshing and affordable drink. Choose from plain, salty, sweet and mixed.
- Drink more masala chai!

Water

- It's not safe to drink tap water in India.
- Use filtered water when brushing your teeth.
- Avoid ice in drinks unless you're at a reputable venue.
- For environmental reasons, avoid buying water in PET bottles. Bring your own reusable water bottle and refill with filtered/reverse osmosis (RO) water as we travel.
- Our hotels provide filtered/RO drinking water in guestrooms and also at breakfast.
- Our private coach will carry large containers of filtered water from which you may refill your own drink bottle.
- Consider investing in a water bottle with its own filter such as: <https://www.fill2purefilters.com.au/> or <https://grayl.com/> to avoid plastic waste altogether.

Toilets

- All our accommodation venues have western toilets
- You may encounter squat toilets, particularly in public places and in rural areas.
- Carry your own toilet paper and hand sanitiser at all times. Paper is not often supplied at public facilities.
- At some public toilets, the attendant may expect a small fee (Rs20-50). During the tour, the tipping kitty will cover this fee for the group. Refer also to [Money](#)
- The issue of what to do with toilet paper is not always clear. Some sewage systems can't handle toilet paper, so if there's a waste-paper basket next to the toilet, that is where the toilet paper goes. Otherwise, flush toilet paper down the toilet. Do not put wipes or other products which don't break down in the toilet.

Workshops and hands-on activities

The hands-on handcraft activities included in this itinerary are not necessarily formal classes with trained teachers. They're more about genuine person to person interactions, cultural exchange and learning directly from authentic, traditional artisans (some are masters) at their workplace, village or home, in their own style.

Safety

- Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues, news, travel restrictions, entry requirements etc involved with international travel. We recommend that you continue to check your government's advice and latest travel information prior to your departure.
- Our tour leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns.
- We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt for the safe keeping of your money, passport, air tickets and other valuable items. Please leave valuable jewellery and items at home.
- Not all of the hotels at which we stay have a safety deposit box for your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.
- To reduce the risk of pick-pocketing, we recommend that you exercise caution when walking alone. We encourage you to walk together and only on main, well-lit thoroughfares at night. Be particularly vigilant on public transport and avoid catching public transport

at night. Simple measures like carrying your day pack on your front, wearing a money belt or neck wallet and not hanging your bag over the back of your chair will reduce the chance that your valuables should go missing.

- Traffic and driving conditions: Depending on where you come from, note that drivers in India may drive on the opposite side of the road to what you're used to and traffic can be a little more chaotic. Look both ways before crossing any road. Stay alert!
- Seat belts: Please be aware that local laws governing transportation safety may differ from those in your home country and not all the transport which we use provides seat belts. Where seatbelts are available, please use them.
- Fire Precautions: Please be aware that local laws governing tourism facilities differ from those in your home country and not all of the accommodations we use have fire exits, fire extinguishers or smoke alarms.
- Swimming pools: You may stay at hotels with unfenced pools and no lifeguard on duty.
- Heritage hotels: During this trip, we will be staying in some charming heritage properties - one of the many highlights of this trip. The staircases, balconies, passages, door heights etc in these restored buildings don't necessarily comply with western safety standards. As many of these properties are preserved in their original state, elevators are not always available.

Travel insurance

- Travel insurance IS NOT included in the trip price and is mandatory for all travellers on all retreat|recreate tours. We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for personal accident, medical expenses, emergency repatriation and death. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers cancellation, curtailment, personal liability, Covid-19 related scenarios as far as possible, and loss of luggage and personal effects.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that you are adequately covered.
- Be sure to carefully note the circumstances under which your chosen insurer will cover you for cancellation.
- You will not be able to join the tour until evidence of your travel insurance (a copy of your policy certificate) and the insurance company's 24-hour emergency contact number have been provided.
- We recommend that you take out travel insurance as soon as you pay your deposit. Insurers will generally allow you to adjust the dates for which you are covered, however if you extend the period for which you are covered, additional charges will apply. Some insurers may charge an amendment fee.

Passports, Visas and e-Arrival cards

- are the responsibility of the individual traveller.
- Please ensure the name on your passport matches the name on your booking and airline tickets.

- Your **passport** must be valid for at least 6 months beyond the duration of your trip and have at least two blank pages.
- Visa requirements, eligibility and fees can change at any time. It's important that you check the latest information, specific to your nationality, with the Indian consulate in your home country.
- An e-Tourist Visa (eVT) is available for holders of passports for a number of countries. Please refer to the official eVT website below, noting the strict conditions regarding eligibility, visa fees, required documents and travel restrictions.
<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>.
- NOTE: Other non-official visa websites are in operation. If you choose to use a party other than the official website above, you do so at your own risk.
- **30 day eVisas** are valid for entry within 30 days of your application submission date, for a maximum stay of up to 30 days. We recommend you only apply for your eVisa less than 28 days prior to your arrival and no later than 7 days prior to arrival. You must enter India before your Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) expires. Be sure to double check your expected arrival date in India is before your e-Visa expiry date.
- If you plan to stay in India for more than 30 days, visas for longer durations are available at an additional cost. Refer to the website above for conditions and fees.
- Closer to departure, participants will be provided with detailed instructions to assist them with their e-Visa application.
- All travellers must complete a **digital arrival card** within 72 hours before their arrival in India at <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/>

Money

- The official currency of India is the Indian Rupee (INR).
- As at May 2026: INR 1000 = USD10.55 / AUD14.65 / EUR8.99 / NZD17.86 / CAD14.32 / GBP7.75
- For up to the minute **currency exchange rates**, download the XE app to your smart phone (before you leave home) or use the convert function on the iPhone calculator App.
- As the Indian Rupee is a closed currency, foreigners are permitted to import only a small quantity of Indian rupees. Refer to the linked document from the Reserve Bank of India issued on 28 Nov 2025 (particularly Q4 and Q5) for full details.
*Any person resident outside India, not being a citizen of Pakistan and Bangladesh and also not a traveller coming from and going to Pakistan and Bangladesh, and visiting India may bring into India currency notes of Government of India and Reserve Bank of India notes up to an amount **not exceeding Rs.25,000** while entering only through an airport.*
- The use of **credit cards** is generally restricted to major hotels, large stores and more upmarket establishments.
- **ATMs (Automated Teller Machines)** are readily available at international airports and in most towns. Bank of India, ICICI and HSBC ATMs are generally the

most reliable for cash withdrawals from non-Indian bank accounts.

- Most ATMs allow a maximum withdrawal of INR10,000 per transaction.
- If you're **exchanging foreign cash currency**, please bring clean bills. Foreign currency notes that are old, torn or faded can be difficult to exchange. Exchange rates at airports are often worse than elsewhere, so you may wish to only exchange a small amount at the airport and then a larger amount once you reach the city.
- Spending Money: Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Please consider your own spending habits when allowing for extra meals, drinks, shopping, additional sightseeing, optional activities, laundry, gifts, souvenirs, porter charges (airports and railway stations), camera fees, tipping and for emergency funds in case of delays. It's always better to allow for a little more than you think you'll need.
- Contingency/Emergency funds: We try to plan for every eventuality, however some things beyond our control. Please make sure you have access to an extra \$1000 for emergencies or in case of unforeseen circumstances (eg. severe weather, natural disasters, civil unrest etc) necessitate last minute changes to enable our trips to continue.
- Gratuities and tips: If you are happy with the services provided, a tip - though not compulsory - is appropriate.
- At our welcome meeting on day 1, our tour leader will discuss the idea of running a **group tipping kitty**. Everybody contributes an equal amount and our tour leader pays the tips on behalf of the group for group activities (eg. for waitstaff, hotel reception, porters, housekeeping, local guides etc) while keeping a running record of all monies spent, ensuring transparency). The amount to budget for the tipping kitty is approximately **INR 9,000 per person (TBC)**.
- The tipping kitty DOES NOT include a tip for our local tour leader so you may wish to set aside some funds for this. It is customary to tip your tour leader at the end of the tour, for outstanding service provided throughout your trip. We suggest around **INR700-850 per person, per day x 15 days = INR10,500-12,750**. You are free to tip our guide more or less as you see fit, depending on your perception of service quality.
- You should also budget for **your own tipping** eg. when you are doing your own optional sightseeing, pre/post-tour activities, any activity not included in the tour that involves local guides and/or drivers, when joining in optional group meals or dining out on your own. We recommend that you carry small notes of local currency to make tipping easier. As a rough guide:
 - for a private driver or tour guide for a full day, tip INR200-250 per person. You're welcome to tip more if you're extremely happy with the service provided.
 - Some restaurant bills will include a service fee, but otherwise tip 10-15% of the bill

- for luggage porters at hotels, a small tip of INR 50 is reasonable.
- for hotel housekeeping staff (pre and post tour), leave INR20-30 under the pillow each morning.
- for arrival and departure airport transfers, a reasonable tip is INR 200 – 500 per transfer.

Commissions

As in many countries, the receipt of commissions or kickbacks in exchange for recommending particular shops, services or activities is ingrained in the culture of the Indian tourism industry. In an effort to best control and monitor shopping and activities with an aim for the best possible experience, our guide has curated a small number of carefully selected shopping experiences and activities based on positive feedback from previous travellers. On occasion these will be part of included walking tours or occasionally outside of included activities in free time. Please be assured that if you prefer not to join in on any shopping experiences there is no obligation to do so. If you do attend, be assured you are not under any obligation to buy.

Phone and internet

- WiFi is generally available in most parts of India and at most of the accommodation we use. Sometimes it's available in guest rooms and at other times is only available in the reception or public areas.
- Please ensure you have internet access at all times during our tour, not just when we're at hotels.
- If you intend to use your mobile phone for keeping in touch with family and friends at home, we recommend you have Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp or other WiFi based communication installed and updated before you leave home as your local App Store won't always work in another country. While you're connected to WiFi, calls and messages are free, otherwise you can use your data connection to make calls and send messages using these Apps.
- We'll set up a WhatsApp group for this tour in the week prior to departure to enable us to stay in contact while we travel. Updates and reminders for the following day will be posted on the group chat each evening. Please ensure you install WhatsApp at least one week prior to departure.
- If you wish to make international phone calls from your mobile/cellular phone, we recommend that you ensure that India is covered by your usual service provider. Check out the global roaming packages, charges and the activation procedure prior to departure. Don't forget to turn off international roaming and data when not in use to avoid a huge phone bill.
- Other alternatives for use in an unlocked mobile phone (and to be purchased prior to departure) are:
 - Purchase an e-SIM eg. Holafly, Airalo etc
 - If you opt for <https://www.airalo.com/> you're welcome to use the discount code SUSAN1062 to receive a small discount
 - If you opt for <https://esim.holafly.com/> feel free to use [this link](#) to receive a small discount

Weather and climate

- February is the dry season in South India. Days are warm and sunny with daytime temperatures generally ranging between 23-32C (73-89F), depending on whether we're near the coast or in the mountains.

What to bring

- Closer to departure, participants will receive a more detailed packing list.
- Generally speaking, you should pack as lightly as possible as you will be expected to manage your own luggage.
- It is recommended that you keep your luggage weight to less than 15kg - at least to begin with ;-)
- Be sure to check the weight and dimensions of luggage allowed by the airline(s) with whom you'll be flying.

Basic requirements are:

- One lockable suitcase with wheels or a medium sized (40-50 litres) back-pack is ideal.
- A daypack/backpack to carry water, sunscreen, medical kit etc. for day trips.
- Please ensure your luggage is clearly labelled.
- Pack easy to wash and fast-drying clothes
- We recommend that you dress conservatively, in comfortable, loose-fitting clothing in light weight, natural fabrics which breathe in warm weather
- Clothing should cover your chest, upper arms, legs and back-side. As a minimum, aim to cover upper arms to mid-calf for modesty and religious respect. No shorts, mini-skirts or revealing necklines please
- Some temples have a strict dress code for women: full length trousers/skirt and long sleeve top. Our local guide will provide advice as we travel.
- Keep a lightweight cotton shawl/scarf handy for use as an extra cover-up at religious sites
- Clothing that can be layered is the best way to tackle temperature variations.
- Medical kit – a detailed list will be provided to participants closer to departure.
- Re-usable water bottle to refill as we travel or a water bottle with its own filter. Avoid single-use plastic.

Group leader and host

- This tour will be accompanied by a local English-speaking tour leader and a retreat|recreate host. The aim of the guide and host is to take the hassle out of your travels and help you have the best trip possible.
- Your **tour leader** will provide information on the areas we visit and suggestions for things to do and see and recommend great local eating venues.
- Your **retreat|recreate host** will provide suggestions of craft and textile-based activities, venues, shopping locations and experiences additional to those included in the itinerary. A list of these additional recommended shops, galleries/museums and activities will be provided closer to departure.

Responsible travel

retreat|recreate believes strongly in sustainable, responsible, ethical travel. Travelling responsibly is all about making good choices and ensuring you have an incredible trip while also having a low impact, or rather a positive impact on the local environment, community and economy. **We operate on principles of respect for all people, cultures, religions and traditions and expect our travellers to extend the same respect.**

How you can be a responsible traveller:

- Choose to travel with a responsible travel company like retreat|recreate
- Consider offsetting the carbon and pollution produced by your flights and travel eg. www.ecologi.com
- Say 'no' to plastic. Avoid buying bottled water and single-use plastic bottles. Fill a reusable water bottle with filtered water or carry your own water bottle with its own filter. Refer to the section on [Water](#).
- A retreat|recreate cloth shopping tote will be provided in your welcome pack on day 1.
- Always dispose of litter thoughtfully, including cigarette butts.
- ALWAYS ask and receive permission before taking photos of people, including children. Please refrain from posting photos of children on social media, as they can end up on the 'wrong' sites.
- Eat at local restaurants, buy from regional artists and support social enterprises (particularly those that support women, girls and marginalised communities) so you can cut out the middle-man and contribute directly to local communities and their economy. Supporting local artisans helps keep traditional crafts alive.
- ALWAYS be respectful of local customs, traditions, religion and culture.
- Dress modestly and respectfully. Shoulders to ankles should be covered, especially when entering places of worship.
- When bargaining at markets, stay calm, be reasonable and keep a smile on your face. It's meant to be fun!
- Learn a few words of the local language and engage with the people around you. A list of useful words and phrases will be provided to participants closer to departure.
- Refrain from giving gifts, sweets or money to locals and children.
- Be an animal-friendly traveller. Only visit venues that respect animals by allowing them to live normally in their natural environment. Steer clear of venues that use animals for entertainment, rides or abnormal activities and/or keep animals in poor and unnatural conditions.

Emergencies and other issues

- While we always endeavour to provide the best experience possible, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit, occasionally things may not go quite according to plan.
- Should any issue occur during the trip, please discuss this with your retreat|recreate host or tour leader in the first instance so we can do our best to rectify the problem.
- In the event of an emergency dial 112
- Our tour operator's local emergency number will be provided to confirmed travellers closer to departure.

A couple of rules

- You must at all times comply with the local laws, customs, foreign exchange and drug and alcohol regulations. Any illegal activity including the use of illegal drugs will not be tolerated. Possession or use of these substances is not only against the law but puts the rest of the group at risk.
- If you choose to consume alcohol while travelling, we encourage responsible drinking and expect that you will abide by the local laws regarding alcohol consumption.
- By travelling with us you agree to adhere to these rules.
- Your group leader and host have the right to remove any member of the group for inappropriate behaviour or breaking any of these rules, with no right of refund.
- If you feel someone is behaving inappropriately while travelling with us, please inform your retreat|recreate host or tour leader immediately.

Travelling on a group trip

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part.

Bring a sense of humour and a sense of adventure!
We're going to have a wonderful trip!

Any other questions?
Email Susan K at retreatrecreate@gmail.com