



Horticulture and Gardens of South India (including the gardens of Delhi) 15 Days/14 Nights

	Activities	Overnight
Day 1	Fly U.S. to Delhi.	Delhi
Day 2	Morning visit to the Mughal Gardens of the Rashtrapati Bhavan, or Presidential Palace (opening dates and times permitting). Lunch will be in beautiful Lodhi Gardens, a popular green spot for locals which contains a number of interesting royal tombs. After lunch, we will visit Humayun's Tomb, the first Persian tomb garden in India, and the serenely landscaped Raj Ghat, the site of Mahatma Gandhi's cremation.	Delhi
Day 3	Morning flight to Chennai. Afternoon visit to Fort St. George, which was built in 1640 and was the East India Company's principal settlement in India until the seat of government was moved to Kolkata in 1774. This will be followed by a visit St. Andrews Kirk, a Neo-Classical church consecrated in 1821 and inspired by St. Martin-in-the-Fields. Evening visit to the Kapaleshwara Temple, the largest in Hindu temple in Chennai.	Chennai
Day 4	Morning drive to Pondicherry, stopping en route to visit the temples of Mahabalipuram. This World Heritage site was built in the 7 th century by a Pallava king and includes rock-cut caves, shrines, temples and massive bas reliefs. Afternoon walking tour of Pondicherry, the former capital of French territories in India, established in 1674 by the French East India Company. Dinner in a local French restaurant.	Pondicherry
Day 5	Today we will visit the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and its communal vegetable and flower gardens. The ashram was founded in 1926 by Bengali poet, philosopher and freedom-fighter Sri Aurobindo Ghose, and attracts disciples from all over the world. If time permits, we will also visit the Pondicherry Botanical Gardens, established in 1826 by French colonists to determine which crops were best cultivated in the region.	Pondicherry
Day 6	Morning drive to Tanjore, which served as the capital of three powerful dynasties between the 9 th and 19 th centuries - the Chola, the Nayaka and the Maratha. After lunch, we will visit the 11 th century Brihadishvara Temple. This complex is one of the finest examples of Chola architecture in India, and features an 80 ton octagonal cupola carved out of a single block of granite.	Tanjore

Day 7	Morning drive from Tanjore to Madurai. Here we will visit the Minakshi Sundareshvara Temple, one of the most vibrant living temples in South India. This complex features 12 gigantic gopuras, or towers, covered with brightly-colored deities, animals and monsters. Continue driving to Periyar, a wildlife sanctuary filled with deciduous forest, grasslands and tropical evergreens.	Periyar
Day 8	Morning visit to one of the many spice, tea and coffee plantations found in Periyar. Lunch will be at a family-run spice plantation. This afternoon you are free to enjoy your hotel, Spice Village. Its extensive grounds feature hundreds of local plant species, an organic vegetable garden and its own wastewater recycling plant.	Periyar
Day 9	Morning drive to the Kumarakom bird sanctuary on Vembanad Lake. Optional afternoon boat ride through the backwaters of Kerala. This network of waterways is home to a rural community in which water and land share equal space and importance. Besides viewing village life up close, you will float through endless rivers of water hyacinth and coconut palms, as well as the occasional roving duck farm.	Kumarakom
Day 10	This morning we will travel by boat to visit one of the many Christian churches in Kerala. The Christian tradition in Kerala dates back to the 1 st century A.D. when, according to legend, the region was visited by St. Thomas shortly after the death of Jesus Christ. This will be followed by a cooking demonstration and lunch at a local plantation house. The rest of the day is at your leisure.	Kumarakom
Day 11	Morning drive to Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala. En route visit to Mannarsala temple, which is dedicated to Nagaraja and is surrounded by thousands of stone serpents. Afternoon tea at the Indian Coffee House, designed by Trivandrum-based architect Laurie Baker. His low-cost, energy-efficient buildings are known for their curved walls, irregular roofs and perforated brick facades.	Trivandrum
Day 12	Morning visit to the Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute of Trivandrum, which was designed with the assistance of Kew Gardens and contains one of the largest live germplasm collections of tropical plants in Asia. This 121 hectare garden also boasts extensive collections of bamboo, orchids, cycads, ferns, ficus, jasmine, palms and medicinal plants. Optional afternoon visit to the Puthen Malika Palace, a superb example of Kerala's typical wooden architecture.	Trivandrum
Day 13	Morning flight from Trivandrum to Bangalore, the Garden City of India. Afternoon visit to Lalbagh Botanical Garden, which was commissioned by Haider Ali, the ruler of Mysore, in 1740. This complex was initially designed in the Mughal style, but now incorporates diverse features such as a Topiary Garden, a Bonsai Garden, and the Glass House, modeled after the Crystal Palace in London. We will also drive through Cubbon Park, which was laid out in 1864 and combines natural rock formations with formal tree allées, massive bamboo plants and numerous statues of important historical figures.	Bangalore
Day 14	Morning drive to Mysore. Afternoon visit to Amba Vilas Palace, a remarkable Indo-Saracenic structure built from grey granite and pink marble	Mysore

by the Wodeyar dynasty. The current building, which was designed by Henry Irwin in 1897, replaces a number of previous structures which were destroyed by fire. This will be followed by a walk through the Devaraja flower and vegetable market, where we will see intricate floral garlands being created for weddings and temple offerings by local florists. We will also visit an outlet for Mysore sandalwood items, including carvings, soaps, essential oils and incense.

Day 15 Morning visit to Brindavan Gardens, a Mughal-style terrace garden completed in 1932 and modeled after the Shalimar Gardens of Kashmir. These gardens were conceived by Sir Mirza Ismail, Chief Financial Officer of Mysore, to beautify the adjacent Krishnaraja Sagar dam. Brindavan is comprised of two separate terrace gardens on opposite sides of the Cauvery River, connected by a foot bridge. Each garden contains water chutes and fountains, decorative viewing pavilions, colorful flower beds, slopes of bougainvillea, ornamental hedges of canna, salvia and galliarda, and ficus, palm and cypress trees. Afternoon drive back to Bangalore for overnight or your return flight to the U.S.

Bangalore/
Flight to U.S.

Suggested Extensions: Nasik – The Wine Capital of India; Historic and Contemporary Mumbai

Trip Timing – This trip can be taken anytime between September and March, with the best weather conditions in November through March. *Note* – *The Presidential Palace gardens are only open in mid-February through mid-March, and the exact dates are not announced until several weeks prior to opening.* In all of our tours, we concentrate our sightseeing in the morning and afternoon hours, avoiding the hot mid-day sun as much as possible.

