

# Indian Cooking and Spice Safari

13 February-3 March, 2010

Parveen and Fiona have worked very, very hard for this tour, [and what a task! ] seeking out good food and recipes in roadside dhabas, restaurants, family run heritage homes and friend's kitchens. The true difficulty though was in cutting the list down to a manageable amount of foodie experiences to fit our trip -India has so much to offer.

Parveen is a keen cook, true to his Rajput heritage his favourite dishes are fiery hot meat based curries. Kindly for his friends he can modify these to suit milder tastes when necessary.

We will be assisted by popular chef Amorelle Dempster of the Hunter Valley of Australia...she will lead future tours.

We will travel from the peaceful spice gardens of India's far south up to the hustle and bustle of the north and experience many regional cuisines along the way, visiting local markets, restaurants whose founder's heritage as a cook stretches back to Emperor Babur in the 1500's, fancy palaces and simple homes – all in the search of a good bite or two.

Tummy problems? Not an issue we have found.

Number one rule - only allow bottled water to pass one's lips [ yes even for teeth cleaning!],

-no ice unless the establishment uses bottled water [up market places are reliable]

-street food can be wonderful -eat at busy places frequented by locals

We will have a CD of recipes and photos of our journey and techniques available for you at the end of our safari so you can get cracking in your kitchen back home.

**Creative Arts Safaris tours are – art and culture based with a hands-on, get out and about type attitude.**

- utilise good quality mid-range up to flash accommodation and excellent dining experiences – *we look for atmospheric places to stay [off the beaten tourists trails where possible]* always good, clean bathrooms, friendly service and comfortable rooms.

- Include most meals [check itinerary] Drinks not included.

- groups of 8-14 participants

*These trips are not traditional package tours, rather it is hoped we can travel as a group of friends; Creative Arts Safaris have done the research, our tutor handles the artistic side and a host makes sure it runs smoothly; we all share our observations and knowledge along the way. [any info you pick up in preparation is easy to share with the group via the internet and helps you 'meet' the others too]*

**Cost – Au \$4950 -twin share**

[includes most things except your shopping!]

Single supplement Au \$1020

Deposit \$500 to book today

Full payment due 14 December, 2009

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or phone +61 [0]2 49 389 410

**Day 1-Saturday, 13 February, 2010 Home/Cherai Beach**

Arrivals- Kochi [formally known as Cochin] International Airport, Kerala. Pick up from airport

**Day 2-Sunday, 14 February, Cherai Beach-/houseboat**

Transfer to the Kerala Backwaters for an overnight cruise on a beautiful Rice Boat [house boat South Indian style, very comfortable western style bed and bathrooms throughout]. Our ships' cooks serve a wonderful range of Kerala Home cooking and are happy to have us visit the galley and gleam recipes as they work. Last time we visited we were lucky enough to find fresh lobsters at a waterside cottage, let's hope we are lucky again, or find some other juicy morsel to add to the dinner feast. [*inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner*]

**Day 3-Monday, 15 February, Allepouza/Thekkady**

Disembarking at Allepouza and leaving the tropical warmth of the low lands we will climb up through rubber, teak, spice, pineapple, tea and coffee plantations into the Cardamom Hills of India's Western Ghats, heading to Thekkady. Towards sunset we will take a boat trip in the Periyar Tiger Project Park, this is the time of day all the animals come down to the water-side, you are never quite sure what you will see but there are good chances of seeing a variety of antelope, some monkeys and wild elephants. [*inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner*]

**Day 4-Tuesday, 16 February, Thekkady**

A day to explore the local area; Spice Gardens first, then a tea plantation and factory.

Elephant rides through a Spice Plantation, wear something you don't mind getting wet and you can help wash the elephants afterwards or sit back and watch as the mahout does it. [*inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner*]

**Day 5-Wednesday, 17 February Thekkady - Aranmula**

We are heading to the Vijnana Kala Vedi Cultural Centre [www.vijnanakalavedi.org](http://www.vijnanakalavedi.org), a centre set up to foster the traditional arts of Kerala and is situated in the village of Aranmula. Aranmula is famed for its Hindu Temple dedicated to Lord Krishna –The Parthasarathy Temple and you often see elephants wandering through the village as they are taken to the temple.

At Vijnana Kala Vedi we have a chance to participate in the Centres daily routine- yoga in the morning if you like, in the afternoon there is Kalaripayat- Keralen Martial Arts before dinner in the Centre's dining pavilion.

In between we have cooking classes scheduled and time to explore the village.

Accommodation is in the Centre's housing [simple, comfortable, western-style bathrooms] which is scattered through the village- all a short walk to classes and dining pavilion.

[*inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner*]

**Day 6-Thursday, 18 February Aranmula – Fort Cochin**

After a morning lesson and lunch we will bid the Centre farewell and head to Fort Kochin, an atmospheric mix of Indian and European architecture abounds. This is where some of the earliest

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European contact took place and over the centuries many nationalities have tried to get a toe hold here- Syrian Christian, Portuguese, Dutch and English.

Towards sunset the place to be is down by the water's edge at the Chinese Fishing Nets, the final catch of the day is being auctioned off, some of the fishermen might be hauling up a catch and you could volunteer to help and just wander around and watch all the action.

If some of the juicy seafood calls to you, purchase your choice and our restaurant will cook it up for you at dinner [ we spotted huge juicy crabs last time still trying to nip you!]

During dinner expect a very good performance of Indian Classical Dance in our hotel's roof top restaurant.

*[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]*

**Day 7-Friday, 19 February**

**Fort Cochin**

A visit to Madhavan Nayar Foundation for an introduction to Kerala history and lunch at the local diner [or Utalpura as it is known in Malayalam – the local language.]

Just up the road is a cooking shop you might like to browse,

## Notes

**Weather** – Weather at this time of year can be warm, yet there can be definite Spring coolness around in the mornings and some evenings after the sun goes down up North. In the Spice growing area of South India up in the Cardamom Hills a cardigan and perhaps socks will be welcome.

**Clothing** – light weight layers of clothing is good. To respect local customs it is best for skirts or trousers to be mid-calf length at least, tops not too revealing. Light, loose layers work well with the climate. Generally I find 3 or 4 outfits sufficient, there is always the opportunity to pick up things along the way. Pack a pair of socks and cardigan for the cool of the morning.

**Shoes** – sensible walking shoes such as sneakers or strapped on sandals are the best options. Surfaces are often rough and you really want your footing stable

so you can focus on all the wonderful things everywhere to look at! Pair of rubber thongs or flip-flops are good – often bathrooms are marble and can be slippery when wet.

**Money** – ATMs are everywhere so you can use a travel card, visa debit or credit advance easily. If you plan to use a card overseas DO warn your bank to expect overseas activity – some will freeze the card wondering what is happening.

Money changes abound to change travellers cheques or currency.

**Camera** – we have a laptop so can download your pictures onto a memory stick [don't forget your connection leads].

**Power** – 240 volts, European adaptor plugs are the most useful.

**Begging?** – is generally not to be encouraged. Giving gifts of pens and lollies to children is encouraging them to learn a begging mentality [if you like to give a gift to children we can hand it onto a school]. There is no pension in India – a few rupees to a very old person or a handicapped person is very kind.

**Tippling?** – we cover tips for the group – eg bags into and out of hotel, dinner etc. If you receive a personal service – eg cup of tea through room service, laundry delivery, it is customary to give a 10 Rp tip. If you enjoy the commentary of a guide, a performance, take a photo of some one posing in the street etc it is customary to give them a 20-50 Rp tip. Set something aside for our driver – he will take us safely and comfortably through the adventure of many Indian roads.

**Step lightly** on our environment, be frugal in water use, turn off power

perhaps you are after an iddli iron or some other local cooking implement?

The range of 'things' is wonderful and what you might use them for makes your mind boggle.

In the afternoon we will visit the ladies of a local Pickle Gallery- this enterprise is a women's co-operative located above a ginger drying factory so the perfume in the air is mouth-watering. The ladies are welcoming us to come and taste their wares and to share their secrets of pickle making. Mouth-watering springs to mind again as a description... then wander back towards our hotel along the Spice Bazaar, where wholesale market of spice, rice and tea occurs- apparently if you buy your red chilli by the truck load you get a really good price- and it can be shipped anywhere- madam/sir!

For dinner we have the chance of a cooking class with a local lady – a few more recipes for the recipe book

*[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]*

**Day 8-Saturday, 20 Feb**

**Fort Cochin/Ahmedabad**

Fly to Ahmedabad and for a change of pace we will have a fine Vegetarian Gurguati Thali dinner to night at our charming Heritage Hotel

*[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]* **[internal flight included]**

**Day 9-Sunday, 21 Feb Ahmedabad- Patan- Poshina**

Heading north towards the Arevali Hills and Poshina we will stop for lunch with a family of weavers in Patan. This family are the last remaining family to uphold the centuries old tradition of double ikat weaving, which is how we initially met them, they also offer a delicious lunch based on fresh organic produce from their own gardens- really delicious local cooking. In the afternoon we will arrive at Poshina and a warm welcome from Hanu and Honi. Mr Hanu is the 8<sup>th</sup> generation ruler of this area and we will be staying in his family fort and home.

Our rooms are in the old Zenana or Ladies quarters. Mrs Honi is a wonderful cook and has invited us into her kitchen to share some of her family recipes- through her family she has regional recipes from Madhya Pradesh, North Gurgurat and the Mewar region of Rajasthan. Time for chapati lessons among other things.

*[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]*

**Day 10-Monday, 22 February**

**Poshina**

A day to wander the village, visit the terracotta horses and enjoy Fort life in Poshina, and pack up a picnic for lunch- Indian -style.

*[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]*

**Day 11-Tuesday, 23 February**

**Poshina- Jodhpur**

An early start we give us a chance to visit Jodhpur's mighty Merherangarh Fort in the afternoon and sample our host Mrs Dhilon's wonderful mutton [goat] curry. Goat is a staple part of the Rajasthani non-veg diet and Mrs Dhilon sets a fine example of a very tender dish. After last night's Old Fort this might seem a very simple guesthouse...but the meal on the lawn makes it memorable.

*[breakfast, dinner]*

**Day 12-Wednesday, 24 February, Jodhpur- Pushkar**

Crossing the edge of the Thar desert we will travel through many small villages to Pushkar. Pushkar is a very Holy village for the Hindu people with the only temple dedicated to Brahma, the Creator found here. This evening we will mount camels or camel carts for sunset in the desert and dinner cooked over an open fire by the Gypsy people [Rebari people] after dinner some of the ladies will treat us to a dance performance around

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the fire, before we head home to our hotel nestled around a rose garden. [*inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner*]

**Day 13-Thursday, 25 February, 2009 Pushkar**

A day to relax and catch your breath. In the afternoon we will stroll through the local market, visit the miller and the yoghurt shop to buy supplies for dinner. Dinner tonight is a hands-on affair as we will cook it ourselves, learn the secrets of the perfect cup of chai and lovely soft chapattis. [*inc- breakfast, dinner*]

**Day 14-Friday, 26 February Pushkar/Jaipur**

Going to Jaipur we will stop off at Barefoot College [www.barefootcollege.org](http://www.barefootcollege.org), a very well established self help co-operative and educational centre. The craft-work they produce is superb and in their little shop they usually have the tastiest example of shrikand we have sampled.

After settling into our hotel we will head up to Tiger Fort to watch the sunset over Jaipur. Dinner will be in our hotel tonight, our hosts' mother oversees the kitchen and is always pleased with the comments she gets from our groups, she is also happy to share recipes with anyone interested. [*breakfast, lunch, dinner*]

**Day 15-Saturday, 27 February Jaipur**

To day is for sightseeing around Jaipur, we will start the day at Amber Fort, the original home of the Rajas of Jaipur, check out some of the markets and in the evening have a traditional Rajasthani Thali at Choki Dhani, all the entertainments of a street fare in a great

#### **Creative Arts Safaris tours include:**

- pickups from the airport for arrivals on Day 1
- departures last day of tour

*[we are happy to organise pick-ups if you arrive earlier or depart later at an extra fee, we are also happy to help with accommodation etc if you wish to stay longer]*

- accommodation from the evening of Day 1 up to and including the night of our Farewell Dinner

*Our accommodation is generally mid-range. We use heritage hotels where we can. All places are clean, friendly and have western bathrooms! It is ambiance and friendliness we are looking for. This is the range where we may meet locals as well – top end is far removed from this and just full of foreigners!*

- all transportation, road taxes and fuel costs for the tour
- all breakfasts and most other meals

*Food is a reflection of the culture and we are pleased to say we will sample a range of good dining experiences.*

- sightseeing entrance fees [which covers the use of a still camera]

- all tuition fees

- all tips for meals, bags etc are included *See tipping in the notes section for tipping for personal requests or other tipping instances.*

#### **You need to cover:**

- some lunches
- bottled drinking water
- laundry
- the one expense that we can't guestimate' for you is shopping! *[this is not a shopping expedition but you will see some amazing things and you will probably want to indulge!]*

- **airfares**

- **travel insurance**

- **visa** [where necessary]

We support Fair Trade and Self-Help organisations where we can and so the only 'shops' listed on our itinerary come under this category [more info in the notes to follow] Don't worry there are also lots of other markets and bazaars we can visit too!

In India we look after our drivers and support staff and only use hotels where our drivers also receive good quality accommodation [some hotels look after their guests and treat their driver miserably]. We have decided to use heritage hotels where we can. They are wonderful, atmospheric places and we believe it helps to keep them maintained rather than leave them deteriorating...

Venue. [*inc-breakfast, lunch, dinner*]

**Day 16-Sunday, 28 February**

**Jaipur/ Delhi**

We leave Jaipur behind and are heading to Delhi, the capital of India. We will drive past Delhi Gate, settle into our hotel and wander the local area today.

[*breakfast, lunch, dinner*]

**Day 17-Monday, 1 March**

**Delhi**

Trying to gently ease you into Delhi is no easy task as Delhi is certainly a shock to the senses- dirty, dusty, exciting, busy, peaceful, you name it anything is possible.

**Lakshmi Narayana Temple-** you always visit the Gods before a new undertaking and this temple, built by the Industrialist Birla in the 1930's has a lovely feel. To the left of the main temple is a small description of the significance of the sacred swastika to Hindus which is good to grasp as you see it everywhere and it can be a shock for Westerners (and the true depth of perversion of the Nazi's use of it can be understood).

**Raj Ghat-** to pay our respects at the cremation site of Gandhi, the beloved hero of India. [Knowing the nation's greatest hero is a man of vision and peace and their most recognised building is a monument to love tells you a lot about this place]

The afternoon is for markets- Ina- great for food, cooking implements, spice and great to wander through the maze of alleyways.

Khan Market is the place for upmarket shopping Indian style. The best samosa shop to be found is tucked into a side wall- usually it is where taxi drivers snack and they know good bites- let's join them!

[*breakfast, dinner*]

**Day 18-Tuesday, 2 March**

**Delhi**

Old Delhi's famous Chandi Chowk is where we are heading today- very much a faded glory, it is as it ever was a great market for good food. Traditional sweet shops, alleys with great paranthas [stuffed breads], velvety Badam milk [almond], fresh, fresh, fresh paneer, spice shops, pickle purveyors, so much to see and taste!

A free afternoon to sleep it off or do last minute shopping.

Dress up in your finery for our last dinner together [ on this trip at least!] we will dine in a restaurant where the owners can trace their cooking tradition back to the time of the first Mughal Emperor nearly 500 years ago.

[*breakfast, dinner*]

**Day 19-Wednesday, 3 March, 2010**

**Delhi- Home**

Departures [*inc- breakfast*]

#### **Take away**

- **a full stomach but we will fit in lots of sightseeing to walk it off**
- **lots of recipes and ideas**
- **written copy of many recipes along the way**
- **Fabulous memories of where it all came from**

**We can't fit the Taj Mahal in along our journey but it would be no problem to organize a 2 day extension for you to drive down and see it.**

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