

# Indian Cooking and Spice Safari

12 February - 2 March, 2011

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 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!], and do drink lots of it, India is a very dry place.

-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 copy of recipes 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 \$4850 -twin share**

[includes most things except your shopping!]

Single supplement Au \$855

Deposit \$1000 to book today– due by 12 Nov, 2010.

Full payment due 28 Dec, 2010

Email [fiona@creative-arts-safaris.com](mailto:fiona@creative-arts-safaris.com)

or phone +44 792 442 4430 [global roaming– anytime]

**Day 1-Sat, 12 Feb 2011**

**Home/Kochi**

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

**Day 2-Sun, 13 Feb 2011**

**Kochi**

In Fort Kochin, an atmospheric mix of Indian and European architecture abounds. This is where some of the earliest European contact took place in India and over the centuries many nationalities have tried to get a toe hold here- Syrian Christian, Portuguese, Dutch and English.

We will start the day with a wander up through the Spice Bazaar –the wholesale market for various spices, rice and tea - apparently if you buy your dried ginger by the truck load you get a really good price- and "It can be shipped anywhere- madam/sir!"

Then visit the ladies of a local Pickle Gallery- this enterprise is a women's co-operative located above a ginger drying factory so the perfumed 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 as a description...

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.] is next, just up the road is a cooking shop you might like to browse, 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.

Later we spend time taking a cooking class with a local family of Syrian Christian origin learning about local ingredients and the tasty way they bring them together for our dinner

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 3-Mon, 14 Feb 2011**

**Kochi/ Allepouzha**

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 4-Tues, 15 Feb 2011**

**Rice Boat/Thekkady**

Disembarking and leaving the tropical warmth of the low lands we will climb up through rubber, teak, vanilla, pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg, 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 Park, this is the time of day all the animals come down to the waterside, 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]

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**Day 5-Wed, 16 Feb 2011** **Thekkady /Kadalikad**

Two nights of a home stay on a family run organic farm in the midlands of Kerala just north of Kochi. Time to explore the gardens, cooking wonderful meals together, trying out many Kerala specialties and seeing what is happening in the local area.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 6-Thurs, 17 Feb 2011** **Kadalikad**

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 7-Fri, 18 Feb 2011** **Kadalikad/ Ahmedabad**

Saying goodbye to the South we will board a flight to Ahmedabad, principle city of Gurgurat and a totally different type of cuisine. Gurgurat is renown for its vegetarian cuisine and tonight we will sample the best of it as a Vegetarian Gurguati Thali dinner at our charming Heritage Hotel. Thali means mixed plate and ours will be filled with delicious morsels, the good thing about this type of service is that they will keep refilling your plate until you are completely satisfied!

[inc- breakfast, dinner]

[internal flight included]

**Notes**

**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.

**Tipping?** – 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 switches, take rubbish with you where possible. **Say NO to Plastic!** Please bring a cloth carry bag.

**Day 8-Sun, 19 Feb 2011** **Ahmedabad/ Poshina**

Heading north towards the Arravalli 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. Time for chapati lessons among other things.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 9-Mon, 20 Feb 2011** **Poshina**

It is papad [ or poppadom] making season– so if the weather is right we can help the ladies up on the roof, mixing, rolling and then setting them out to dry. There will be time to wander the village, visit the terracotta horses and enjoy Fort life in Poshina, and pack a picnic for lunch– Indian –style.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 10-Tues, 21 Feb 2011** **Poshina/ Jodhpur**

Afraid it is an early start to reach Jodhpur and a wander around the Clock Tower market. Snack time! Just near the gate is a very popular diner selling all manner of Indian take away– freshly made samosa, kachori [puffs of pastry filled with spicy dal] and chilli pokora before we 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, lunch, dinner]

**Day 11-Wed, 22 Feb 2011** **Jodhpur/ Pushkar**

A morning visit to mighty Merherangarh Fort then we are on the way to 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.

**Day 12– Thurs, 23 Feb 2011** **Pushkar**

An early morning local bus trip into Ajmer, like the locals do it and a wander through the market, lunch at our favourite lassi [yoghurt drink] shop and dhaba. This evening we will mount camels or camel carts for sunset in the desert and dinner of the Rajasthani special of dal-butti-chorma and Gypsy dancing will finish off the evening. [breakfast, dinner]

**Day 13-Thurs, 24 Feb 2011** **Pushkar**

A day to relax and catch your breath. In the afternoon we will stroll through the local market, buy veggies, visit the flour 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 a range of vegetarian treats. Pushkar is a very holy place and pure vegetarian.

[inc- breakfast, dinner]

**Day 14-Fri, 25 Feb 2011** **Pushkar/Jaipur**

Going to Jaipur we will stop off at Barefoot College

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[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 if we are lucky their little shop also has the tastiest example of shrikand [ a sweetened yoghurt desert] 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 our groups always enjoy her cooking, she is also happy to share recipes with anyone interested.

[breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 15-Sat, 26 Feb 2011**

**Jaipur**

Today 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, and all the entertainments of a street fare in a great venue. The thali here usually has some vegetables local only to Rajasthan harvested from desert areas and is very tasty, this is served along with bajra [millet] chapattis which have been cooked over an open fire.

[inc-breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 16-Sun, 27 Feb 2011**

**Jaipur/ Agra**

Sightseeing today, visiting monuments built by the Mughals- as invaders, among other things they brought new influences to the cuisine of the north...

#### 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
- 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...

and being so close who can resist a chance to see the Taj Mahal and Akbar's atmospheric abandoned city of Fatehpur Sikri? Today is Fatehpur Sikri and along the way is also a good pickle shop, where we can stop for a tasting.

[breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 17-Mon, 28 Feb 2011**

**Agra/ Delhi**

An early morning visit to the Taj Mahal and then onto Delhi, picking up a box of sweets that are specialty of the area—yummy Panchi Peta to keep us going.

[breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 18– Tues, 1 March 2011**

**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 milk], 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-Wed, 2 March 2011**

**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 recipes from along the way**
- **Fabulous memories of where it all came from**

**If you are like me there is nothing like a good cook book or two...here are some of my favourites**

\*\* **Monisha Bharadwaj** *The Indian Kitchen*- excellent reference to the ingredients found in an Indian Kitchen and very tasty recipes to try the ingredients out. [quite possibly the 'must have' reference for your shelves]

**Charmaine O'Brien** *The Flavours of Delhi- a food lover's guide*. A great guide with good recipes of Delhi, and its history of influences- yum!

**Lizzie Collingham** *Curry- A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors*. Great read- history and how it impacted on the wonderful cuisine of India

**Madhyr Jaffrey**- *Climbing the Mango Trees*- autobiography of a well known food writer, excellent read and great recipes- any of her food books are worth having

**Renuka Devi Chioudhrani**- *Pumpkin Fritters and other Classic Recipes from a Bengali Kitchen*—yum

**Vijayan Kannampilly** *The Essential Kerala Cookbook*

**Vir Sanghvi**- *Rude Food-Collected Food Writings of Vir Sanghvi*- daytime insightful political columnist, evening gourmet, with amusing and insightful comments on the Indian culinary scene.

**www.tarladalal.com**— sign up for the free newsletter- often great and authentic Indian recipes

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