



**TRIP NOTES**

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# **BELIEVE ACHIEVE INSPIRE**

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**THE NICKI WATERMAN KERALA  
CYCLING CHALLENGE  
INDIA**

Sat 11 Mar - Sat 18 Mar 2017





## In aid of Brain Tumour Research

11 Mar - 18 Mar 2017



### 8 DAYS | INDIA | CHALLENGING

Prepare to be mesmerised by Kerala. Meaning 'land of coconuts', it's hardly surprising Kerala is almost entirely shaded by a palm canopy. Home to elephants, tea plantations, a world-class cuisine and many adventure travel opportunities, India's tropical south is the perfect setting for a life-changing adventure.

Soak up the laid back atmosphere as you explore this idyllic coastal state during five days of challenging cycling. Beginning and ending in historic Cochin, set amid a cluster of islands and narrow peninsulas, the route passes through cardamom plantations, paddy fields and dramatic mountain scenery. So when all the hard work is done, why not take a tour of this picturesque corner of the world?

- Cycle more than 300kms through spectacular scenery and the backwaters of southern India
- Explore historic Cochin, a former Portuguese settlement
- Experience the diverse birdlife of the Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary
- Pedal the backroads through tea and spice plantations
- Catch a glimpse of Kerala's incredible wildlife, including tigers and elephants

## YOUR CHALLENGE DAY BY DAY

### DAY 1 Sat 11 Mar

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#### Departure from London

The journey begins at the airport for your overnight flight to Cochin. Your Charity Challenge Cycling Leader will meet you at the airport and assist with the check-in and any last minute questions.

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### DAY 2 Sun 12 Mar

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#### Arrive in Cochin

There will be a full challenge briefing after you check in at the hotel. Depending on your flight arrival time if there is some time before dinner, we will explore Cochin, a fascinating and beautiful city founded by the Portuguese in the early 16th century. After a little bit of sightseeing, you may then choose to unwind with an ancient and relaxing ayurvedic massage. Overnight in hotel.

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### DAY 3 Mon 13 Mar

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#### Cycle Cochin to Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary (55 Kms)

Saddle up for the first day of cycling! Leave the city behind as we head towards Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary, one of India's richest bird habitats. Here more than 270 species are found in just 25 square kilometres. Look out for the rare mottled wood owl, spot-bellied eagle owls and rusty-tailed flycatchers, during the afternoon. Onwards to the outskirts of the Kokanad Elephant Rescue Centre before overnighting at camp.

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### DAY 4 Tue 14 Mar

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#### Cycle to Munnar (65 Kms)

Today we pass through the Western Ghats of south-western India, known locally as the Sahyadri Hills. The route meanders through rich ecosystems, so look out for the endangered Indian elephants, bison, monkeys and birds of prey. Munnar is the gateway to the mountains and home to some of the world's highest tea-growing estates and spice plantations, which combined make this former hill station an ideal retreat. Overnight in Munnar

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### DAY 5 Wed 15 Mar

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#### Cycle Munnar to Vandanmedu (82 Kms)

Our third day of pedalling takes us to Vandanmedu. Once there, we plan to visit the tribal inhabitants of the area and the village's incredible cardamom and pepper spice plantations. Our route follows tea estate tracks through eucalyptus forest and tea bushes, inviting us to interact with many tea pickers along the way. Overnight on a boutique eco resort.

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### DAY 6 Thu 16 Mar

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**Cycle Vandanmedu to Periyar Wildlife Park (45 Kms)**

Today we will cycle to Periyar, one of India's greatest tiger reserves. Altogether 62 different kinds of mammals have been recorded in Periyar. There are up to about 40 tigers, but also some 1,000 Indian elephants too. The reserve, which extends over 777 square kilometres, is also home to wild boar, leopards, monkeys and much more. Forest guides will provide an amazing insight into the unique flora and fauna. Overnight on the outskirts of Periyar Wildlife Park.

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**DAY 7** *Fri 17 Mar*

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**Cycle Periyar to Vagamon (53 Kms)**

the final day on the bike and definitely one to remember! The route to Vagamon is a scenic one, passing through Alleppey, a vast network of waterways. We will pedal hard past miles of palm trees, small villages, lagoons, lakes, rivers and canals. Tonight we celebrate this fantastic achievement with a victors' meal and a night on our resort on the backwaters.

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**DAY 8** *Sat 18 Mar*

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**Depart Cochin to London**

Transfer back to Cochin Airport for the return flight to London. Be sure to swap details with new-found cycling pals on the flight home.

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## HOW TO FUND YOUR CHALLENGE

### SELF FUNDER

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Pay a registration fee of £2037.00 when you book

Then a balance of £0.00

(8 weeks before your challenge)

Raise as much as you can for your charity.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

### Before you go

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- 12.5% off Cotswold Outdoor, Snow + Rock, and Runners Need
- Access to UK based training weekends (optional and at additional expense)
- 12.5% off Cotswold Outdoor, Snow + Rock, and Runners Need
- Risk assessment and emergency management planning
- Fitness training notes
- Fundraising advice

### On your challenge

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- International flights to and from the UK (including all known UK air taxes, and fuel surcharges, at the time of costing)
- Bike
- An English speaking first aid trained challenge leader and full local support team (assistant, drivers, mechanic, medic)
- All challenge management before, during and post event
- A Charity Challenge T-Shirt
- A donation to a community project in one of the countries in which we operate
- Activity equipment such as bikes, tents and rafts as per the challenge activity
- All ground staff including English speaking guide, drivers, cooks, and porters
- Entrance fees to national parks or other places of interest visited on the itinerary
- Drinking water on challenge days
- Accommodation during the challenge (usually in twin share)

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

### Before you go

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- Visa
- Vaccinations (please check Trip Notes for requirements)
- Travel Insurance (you can buy at time of booking or in your Account Area, or provide your own policy details)
- Clothing and equipment listed on your Kit List

### On your challenge

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- Helmet
- Tips
- Personal spending money

## THE DETAILS

### Fundraising deadlines

You will need to send your sponsorship money to the charity as you raise it. At least 80% of the minimum sponsorship required must be sent to the charity 10 weeks before departure (by 31/12/2016), and the remaining 20% within 4 weeks of completing the challenge (by 15/04/2017). If you have raised the necessary funds, the charity will then pay the balance of your challenge costs. The charity benefits by keeping the remaining sponsorship money and every pound over and above that you raise.

### Prices include all known air taxes

We include ALL known air taxes (including fuel) at the time of costing. Many companies do not include air taxes at all, and clients are therefore hit with a surcharge of three or four hundreds of pounds just before departure. Our aim is to provide you with transparent pricing and clear instructions as to what is included in our prices and if applicable what isn't.

### Typical group size

The typical group size is 15 - 32 participants

### Travel insurance

Your safety when travelling with Charity Challenge is our main concern, which is why it is a booking condition that you have a suitable travel insurance policy, which covers you for the adventurous nature of your challenge, the activities you are undertaking, and the altitudes. We have chosen to partner with specialist travel insurance providers Campbell Irvine, who offer cover for an extensive number of adventurous activities. Cover is available directly from Campbell Irvine for most European residents and includes cover for emergency medical and repatriation and for your cancellation or curtailment of the challenge. Full details including costs may be found at <http://www.campbellirvinedirect.com/charitychallenge>.

## Responsible Tourism

At Charity Challenge we are committed to sustainable and responsible tourism, and work closely with bodies such as the International Porter Protection Group and Climate Care to ensure that our challenges benefit the local environments and communities in which they take place. We ensure that all rubbish is disposed of responsibly, and following local guidelines on cultural and environmental protection and respect, we aim to limit our impact on the natural environment. For more information, please visit our Responsible Tourism pages, where you will be able to view a list of the projects that we currently support.

## Challenge Training

If you would like to get a feel for our challenges ahead of your departure, why not consider booking on a 1 or 2 day UK Challenge?

We have a variety of challenges, covering all levels of difficulty, taking place in stunning National Parks across the UK that are led by highly qualified and experienced expedition and mountain leaders. These challenges will give you the perfect opportunity to monitor fitness levels, test out your kit, meet people in the great outdoors, share fundraising stories and gain valuable advice and support for the challenge ahead. We encourage participants to make use of our highly knowledgeable leaders and ask them any questions you may have about clothing and equipment, expedition health and wellbeing, trekking skills, walking techniques and teamwork!

We are offering all participants **50% off** the registration fee when you book on one of the UK challenges listed via the link below. Just use the code **TRAINING** when booking. T&C's – you must have an active booking on a challenge to avail of this offer. Discount cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Find out more [here](#)

## Training

A good level of fitness is definitely required. Anyone who leads an active and healthy lifestyle and cycles on a regular basis, with training, should find this a manageable challenge. As always, however, the more you exercise before the challenge, the more you will get out of it. To train, cycle for a full day at a time or even a whole weekend in order to build up your stamina. Don't forget that the climate is different to the UK, and that you will be exercising constantly for a number of days in the heat and sunshine. You will only be expected to carry water and any essentials that you would carry on a day ride – our support team will take care of the rest of your luggage. Also see the Fitness Training Advice notes.

## Emergencies

The event is not run as a race and there is always a large discrepancy in people's cycling ability, which is allowed for. There will be a staff member at the back of the group at all times to ensure that you are not left behind and can take things at your own pace. If we find that somebody is unable to cycle at all, then we can transport them from one location to the next by our support vehicle, but only as a final option (due to often poor weather conditions this can be difficult). Contact will be maintained between guides and the support team allowing for emergency evacuation if necessary.

## Safety

Charity Challenge considers the safety of all of its participants and staff to be a top priority, and as such we have set up one of the most advanced and thorough safety management systems in the industry. In a nutshell, Our Challenge Safe brand formalises our ethos when it comes to safety, and brings together the procedures and risk management strategies that we use to audit all aspects of our challenges, from vehicles to accommodation to the activity itself. Your welfare is paramount!

In terms of your Kerala Cycle challenge, there are a couple of important points that you should be aware of:

- Riding in the heat of India is a major challenge in itself so make sure you are well hydrated throughout.
- This trip involves dirt tracks with lots of loose stones and rocks so concentration while riding through these areas is essential
- Smoke alarms are not compulsory in India, and as such very few accommodations will include them. Your tour leader will explain the emergency procedures.
- You will be riding on the right-hand side of the road, through occasionally busy areas. Make sure that you are paying attention at all times.
- The brakes on the bikes may be on the opposite side to what you are used to in the UK. Take the first morning slow and steady until you get used to this.

## Phone and WiFi

During the Kerala cycle, phone and WIFI connection will be available almost throughout the whole challenge.

## Toilets

You will be staying in hotels or guesthouses, with good toilet facilities.

## Bikes

The bikes are new, 18-gear Trek or Firefox bikes. They are some of the best bikes available in India; however, they probably do not compare to your bike at home. We add removable bar-ends to the bikes. We also add bells and water bottle holders. Please bring your own toe-clips and peddles if you prefer and we can add them. We take plenty of spares and our mechanics are on hand at all times for repairs or adjustments. The maximum frame size available in India is 19-inch.

## Clothing and Equipment

Good quality, durable kit could mean the difference between a fantastic challenge experience and an uncomfortable one. For your cycle challenge, padded cycling shorts and comfortable footwear are essential, and helmets are compulsory throughout. Training with your cycling shorts is definitely advised! You can bring equipment like clip-in pedals or a gel seat, if desired, in order to adapt your bike in country, and we would also recommend technical/wicking t-shirts rather than cotton shirts. A full kit list for this challenge can be found here, once you book you will have access to kit discounts with our partners The Outdoor Shop, Outdoorhire and Cotswold



Outdoor.

### Food & Drink

You will be served a variety of European and Indian food. All meals are healthy, nourishing, and plentiful. Please let Charity Challenge know prior to departure if you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies.

### Accommodation

During the challenge sector you will be staying mainly in hotels and heritage accommodation. If you are travelling with a friend or partner who you wish to share with please let Charity Challenge know in advance.

### Typical Day

You will wake early (around sunrise) in time for a hearty breakfast. Cycling days will last between 4-8 hours, including breaks and snacks. You will have a leisurely break for lunch around noon – packed or cooked lunch will be provided. We will head on at around 1-2 pm. You will arrive at your accommodation before sunset. Supper will be prepared and you can relax as the stars come out.

### Level of Difficulty

This challenge has been graded 'Challenging', This is the perfect challenge for participants who are of an adventurous spirit and an open mind, but perhaps haven't taken on a strenuous challenge event before and are hoping to push themselves out of their comfort zone. You can tell your supporters that on your Kerala Cycle, you will be:

- Cycling between 7-9 hours per day.
- Cover an overall distance of 300 kilometres.
- Hitting the tarmac in extremely hot conditions.

### Luggage allowance and valuables

As no formal clothes are needed, luggage should be kept to the absolute minimum – details on what to pack are provided in your Kit List. Your rucksack (suitcases are not appropriate) must not exceed 20kgs in weight. Your luggage will be transported in our support vehicle from hotel to hotel.

### Terrain

Most of the bike trip is on tarmac roads with some cycling on dirt roads also. They are 'Indian' tarmac roads so do have potholes and can be bumpy. The terrain is very mountainous so be prepared for some tough days but the stunning views, ambience and welcoming nature of the Keralan people will be ample reward for all your hard work.

## Climate

India is so vast that the climatic conditions in the far North have little relation to those of the extreme South. Kerala enjoys a moderate and pleasant climate. The mean temperature in the warmest month (April) is 27.1°C and in the coldest month (January) is 20.4°C. The temperature during the day rarely exceeds 35°C in summer (April and May) and seldom falls below 8°C on winter nights (December, January and February). The atmosphere is neither very humid nor very dry.

Early morning fog occurs between October to February but mainly in December and January. An important feature influencing the climate of Kerala is the low cloud which covers almost the entire sky during greater part of the day from June to September. The morning hours in these months, with overcast skies, little or no rain and a fresh breeze with temperature of the order of 21°C to 25°C are the most pleasant in the year.

## Leadership

We employ a number of first aid qualified challenge leaders, all of whom speak fluent English. They will be ultimately responsible for the running of the itinerary and the safety of your group.

## Group Size

The group is intended to be a minimum of 16 people in order to run and a maximum of approximately 30 people due to the wilderness environment in which the challenge takes place. We will be able to run this challenge for 12 to 15 people by charging a small group supplement, which will be added to your final balance invoice (self-funders) or charged to your charity (minimum sponsorship or flexi).

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have a suitable travel insurance policy whilst participating on the challenge. We have a special policy which covers among other things, medical (emergency, evacuation and repatriation) arrangements, cancellation and curtailment of the challenge, and more specifically for the adventurous activities undertaken on this challenge. If you have your own travel insurance policy, you must ensure that it provides at least the same level of cover as our recommended policy, including protecting the charity in the event of your cancellation 56 days or less prior to departure. If you choose not to purchase our recommended policy when you book we will send you a disclaimer which you should complete and return.

For more general travel insurance questions, please refer to our main [FAQs page](#).

## Flights

You will be flying from London Heathrow to and back from Cochin, India. Your flight tickets will be given to you at the airport by our airport representative, who will meet you at the airline check-in desk. If you choose to book your own flights you must confirm with the Charity Challenge office before paying otherwise you may be liable for your included group flights (please contact [flights@charitychallenge.com](mailto:flights@charitychallenge.com) for further assistance).

## Vaccinations

For up to date vaccinations information please visit the NHS website 'Fit for Travel' at: <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx>. To avoid mosquito bites, we recommend wearing long-sleeved shirts, long trousers and socks at dawn and dusk. You should also wear plenty of insect repellent.

## Visa

You must hold a full ten-year passport with at least six months to run from the end of your challenge, and at least one blank page for your visa and entry/exit stamps.

All foreign nationals require a visa to enter India. British Citizens are now eligible to get an online visa before arrival to Indian.

**Important note:** British passport holders of Pakistani origin will still have to apply for a paper visa (not online) and they may have difficulty in obtaining a visa for India and should check the requirements with the Indian High Commission before signing up to this challenge.

## Money

**Currency:** The currency is the Rupee, abbreviated as Rs. For up to date currency exchange, go to:

<http://www.xe.com/>. Foreign currency regulations are strict. No Rupee currency may be imported or exported. You may be able to purchase rupees from some UK exchanges prior to travel; however, please note importing currency must be done at your own risk. We recommend you to bring sterling or dollars to exchange at the airport in Delhi.

**Credit Cards:** A growing number of hotels, restaurants and shops in the major cities are beginning to accept credit cards, the well-known and more accepted ones being American Express, Access/MasterCard, Diners Club and Visas. However, credit cards are not the most convenient form of payment or cash withdrawal.

**ATMs:** Please note that ATMs are not always available and that when they are they do not always work. It is generally easier to visit a bank, but your local guide will advise.

**How much to bring:** You will not need large amounts of money during this challenge, and other than at the start and end of the trip, you will be in the mountains away from any foreign exchanges or banks. You will only need money for tips, additional food & drink, gifts & souvenirs, and for any other additional activities that you may wish to do. On average, we recommend around £200 in cash, plus a credit card for emergencies. Keep in mind that you will not be able to buy Rupees before entering India, and so you are advised to take a sufficient amount of cash that you can change at the airport or in Cochin.

**NB:** By changing at the airport while some of the group collect the luggage you will save time – the Indian Exchanges are generally the fastest.

**Tipping:** Tipping is personal and at your sole discretion. You should only tip if you feel that you have received good service. We recommend approx. £10 per person per challenge day and this should be given to the challenge leader/shepa guide at the end of the trip who will advise how to distribute it among the support team at your final celebration. NB: You may be approached by local porters at the airport. Their tips are not included; if you agree for them to take your bags to the transfer vehicle, please be prepared to tip them a small, nominal amount. However, our team will be there to help you.

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## Any more questions?

Contact us:

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