

## **The Hidden Treasures of Southern India with Charles Allen**

**31<sup>st</sup> January to 13<sup>th</sup> February 2011**

**Bangalore – Mysore – Srirangapatnam – Sravanabelagola – Hampi – Aihole  
Bijapur – Gulbarga – Bidar – Hyderabad**

South India has many hidden delights for the traveller but has long been neglected in favour of the more accessible North. The fact is that states like Karnataka have failed to market their charms or to invest in the four and five star infrastructure now commonplace in the ‘Golden Triangle’ of Delhi-Agra-Jaipur. But this has many advantages for the discerning traveller, in terms of a more relaxed, welcoming and less exploitative atmosphere. The South is strikingly different; its landscapes softer and greener, its peoples better educated and easier to get along with. Its culture and history are also more complex, more full of surprises than elsewhere, but this is what makes visits to such long hidden gems as Hampi so enjoyable. Foreign travel should always be an adventure but never a slog, and this is what this novel itinerary sets out to provide.

Following the success of our ‘Into India’ tour in 2010 we are delighted to welcome back Charles and Liz Allen for this tour in 2011. Historian, broadcaster and traveller Charles Allen was born in India in the last years of the British Raj, where five generations of his family had lived and served. Since returning to the sub-continent as a volunteer teacher in the late 1960s, he and his wife Liz have travelled frequently and extensively throughout India, the Himalayas and central Asia. Charles Allen is an acknowledged authority on British Indian and South Asian history and in 2004 was awarded the Sir Percy Sykes Gold Medal by the Royal Society for Asian Affairs for his contribution to Asian studies. He is an active Fellow of the Royal Geographical and Royal Asiatic Societies and an elected member of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, the Explorers Club and the Frontline Club. As an accomplished traveller, he has made many ‘off-piste’ journeys in remote corners since winning the Sunday Telegraph Traveller of the Year award in 1967. Between 1997 and 2001 he led three expeditions to far western Tibet to explore the ancient pre-Buddhist kingdom of Zhang-Zhung and has published over 21 books on the Indian sub-continent. As well as being a leading authority on the British period in India (*Plain Tales from the Raj*, *Soldier Sahib* etc). Charles has in recent years been concentrating on India’s early history, his most recent work being focussed on the Buddhist Emperor Ashoka, the subject of his latest book, to be published in 2011.

**Day 1      Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January                      London Heathrow to Bangalore**

Depart from London Heathrow Terminal Five on British Airways flight BA119 at 1350 hours non stop to Bangalore.

**Day 2      Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February                      Bangalore to Mysore – 145kms (L/D)**

Arrive into Bangalore at 0450 hours local time and on arrival transfer to the nearby **Clarks Exotica Hotel** to rest and acclimatise before continuing after lunch by coach to Mysore. Stay for two nights at the **Regalis Hotel** (Club Rooms) which is centrally located in the city.

Mysore is a relaxed city which is surrounded almost entirely by fertile farmland and tree clad hills. Until independence Mysore was the seat of the Maharajas of Mysore, a princely state covering about a third of present day Karnataka. The city is now noted for its sandalwood carvings, incense manufacture, silk weaving and for its coffee.

**Day 3      Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February                      Mysore (B/L/D)**

After breakfast drive outside of the city to see the Sri Chamundeswari Temple at Somnathpur, built around 1260 AD by the Hoysala Kings. The walls of this temple are covered with stone animal sculptures – it has been said that this is one of the most beautiful and interesting buildings in India.



Mysore City Palace

On your return to Mysore visit Srirangapatnam, a fortified island site in the Kaveri River. Due to its strategic location over the years Srirangapatnam has been home to religious reformers as well as military conquerors. The fort, originally built under the Vijayanagar kings in 1454, came under the control of Haider Ali and then his son, Tipu Sultan, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, becoming the foundation of their sustained expansion of power throughout much of Southern India. This inevitably brought them into conflict with the fast expanding East India Company, leading to Tipu Sultan's demise at the hands of the ambitious Governor-General Richard Wellesley and his younger brother Col. Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, at the battle of Srirangapatnam in 1799. Tipu Sultan was killed defending his capital at the north gate of the fort whilst the victorious Arthur Wellesley had taken the first steps of what was to be an illustrious career.

*One of Charles's early forebears fought at Srirangapatnam as an eighteen-year-old ensign and guarded Tipu's treasure on the night following the assault.*



Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace

Return to Mysore to visit the City Palace which was re-built by Henry Irwin in 1897 after the original wooden palace was destroyed in a fire. It is one of the largest palaces in the country and is Indo-Saracenic in style with domes, arches and colonnades of carved pillars.

**Day 4      Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> February      Mysore to Bangalore – 240kms (B/L/D)**

This morning visit Sravanabelagola, situated 80kms to the north of Mysore, a Jain pilgrimage site and home to the statue of Gommateshwara. Revered by Jains, the statue stands on Vindhyagiri and towers over the countryside and town below capturing the tranquillity that is akin to much Buddhist and Jain art. Erected in 980 AD the Gommateshwara statue is over 17m high and represents the saintly prince *Bahubali*, son of the first Tirthankara, after he had reached enlightenment. Seven hundred steps, carved into the steep slope, lead to the statue and the path provides wonderful views of the surrounding area. There are several small shrines on the way up the slope, all were built in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and many are intricately carved, and it is worth pausing at some of them before you reach the summit. Should you not wish to climb the steps it is possible to take a *dhooli* and be carried to the top.



Sravanabelagola



visitors and locals alike or visit the imposing Virupaksha Temple at the head of the Hampi bazaar.



Stone Chariot and the Vitthala Temple in background

**Day 8      Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February      Hospet to Bijapur – 285kms (B/L/D)**

After breakfast leave for Aihole, the first Chalukyan capital, and regarded as the birthplace of Indian temple architectural styles with over 140 temples illustrating a range of differing styles from Hoysala, Dravida, Jain, Buddhist, Nagara and Rekhanagara. The Durgigudi Temple is particularly interesting and is probably unique in India due to it being circular in shape and surmounted by a primitive gopuram.



Durgigudi Temple – Aihole

In the afternoon continue to Bijapur and stay for two nights at **Hotel Madhuvan International**.

**Day 9      Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> February      Bijapur**

This morning start your tour of Bijapur. This town is very distinct from the surrounding area and has a beautiful collection of Mughal, Islamic, architecture. Start your day at the Golgumbaz, a towering mausoleum which has one of the largest unsupported domes in

the world. The gardens here are well maintained and a climb to the top of this huge structure is rewarded with far reaching views of the town and the surrounding area.



Golgumbaz

There is a museum in the Golgumbaz complex which is worth visiting. Next continue to the opposite end of Bijapur to visit the Ibrahim Rauza, a 17th Century mausoleum built of white marble and which has more than a passing resemblance to its more famous cousin the Taj Mahal. This beautiful structure is perfectly formed and is surrounded by serene gardens that provide a welcome relief from the bustle of the town. Afterwards, travel the short distance to the citadel, climb the ramparts and find one of the remaining original canons that at one time used to protect Bijapur before ending the tour at the Jama Masjid – considered one of the region's finest mosques.



Ibrahim Rauza

**Day 10      Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> February      Bijapur to Gulbarga – 160kms (B/L/D)**

Today continue on to Gulbarga, the first capital of the Bahmanis from 1347 to 1525 and, for South Indian Muslims, the home of Saiyid Muhammad Gesu Daraz Chisti, 1320 to 1422, who was influential in spreading the Islamic faith throughout the region. Noted for its fort, Gulbarga is also home to an old mosque – the Jami Masjid – and many great tombs. Start your tour at the fort. Originally built in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century by Ala-ud-din Bahmani, much is now in ruin although the huge citadel, or *Bala Hissar*, is still intact and

little imagination is needed to picture the entire structure in its full splendour. Continue to the Jami Masjid built by Firoz Shah Bahmani in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and where similarities to the mosque at Cordoba, Spain, have resulted in a legend that it was designed by a North African Moorish architect. Conclude your tour at the tombs of the Bahmani sultans with the Hazrat Gesu Nawaz, Haft Gumbaz and the striking, highly decorated Taj-ud-Din Firuz the best examples. Stay overnight at the **Hotel Sun International**.

**Day 11      Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> February                      Gulbarga to Hyderabad – 250kms (B/L/D)**

This morning continue onto the medieval town of Bidar. Expanded in 1424 by Ahmad Shah I after he had moved his capital from Gulbarga following the fragmentation of the Bahmani Empire, Bidar retains much of its old charm and heritage. Ahmad Shah left an indelible mark on Bidar significantly rebuilding the old Hindu fort to withstand cannon attacks, and, as it has turned out, the rigours of time, as well as enriching the town with beautiful palaces and gardens of which many still remain.

First of all head into the Inner Fort passing through the three huge gates of which the third, the Gumbad Darwaza, built in the 1420s, clearly shows Persian influence. Inside the fort places on interest include the Rangin Mahal, or Coloured Palace, the Lal Bagh with its remains of water channels and a fountain, the Sola Khamba or Zanani Mosque built in 1423 and the Tarkash Mahal which may have once been a harem and still retains original tile work. In the afternoon continue to Hyderabad to stay for three nights at the **Taj Falaknuma Palace (Luxury Rooms)**.



Taj Falaknuma Palace

Falaknuma Palace offers a unique glimpse into the extravagant lifestyle of the Nizams who once governed the city of Hyderabad. Completed in 1893, the Falaknuma, or ‘Mirror of the Sky’, was built by an over-ambitious minister of Nizam Mehboob Ali Khan who was then forced to surrender it to the Nizam as a ‘present’, after which it became the royal guesthouse of the Nizams. After ten years of sensitive restoration, Taj Hotels have reopened this sixty room private palace – a place which was once the sole preserve of visiting royalty from King George V to the last Russian Tsar, Nicholas II. Falaknuma Palace also offers a glimpse into the imperial lifestyle of the Nizams who once governed the city of Hyderabad. Nestled amidst unique themed gardens, the palace is a rare blend of Italian and Tudor architecture. The exquisite rooms and suites were once the private



Travel out to see the Golconda Fort one of the most impressive citadels in India and built on a hill 120m high and surrounded by huge ramparts. Originally built of mud during the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, by the Kakatiyas of Warangal and subsequently upgraded by the Bahmanis in 1363, Golconda is a vast hilltop fort, built on a grand scale and encircled by three defensive walls including a 5kms citadel wall with 87 bastions, eight gates and numerous guardrooms. Eventually falling to Aurangzeb after an eight month siege, the fort was famed for its ingenious water system, hanging gardens and diamond vault which once held the *Koh-i-noor* and *Hope* diamonds. Places of interest include the Grand Portico, Mortuary Bath, Armoury, harem, Rani Mahal and Durbar Hall. You will also have the opportunity to visit the tombs of the Qutb Shahi Kings. Built under the instruction of the rulers themselves, they are built in Persian, Pathan and Hindu architectural styles using black granite or greenstone complete with plaster decoration with the larger tombs with their own mosque attached.

**Day 14      Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February                      Hyderabad to London**

Transfer to the airport in good time to catch non-stop British Airways flight BA276 to London Heathrow Terminal Five which departs at 0745 hours and arrives in London at 1300 hours local time on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February.

**END OF SERVICES**

**STAYING ON**

Whilst in India, you may wish to take advantage and extend your stay. By combining your ideas with our knowledge and expertise we can help you to create your own personal extension that is tailored exactly to your requirements. As this tour ends in Hyderabad the options are almost limitless and we have detailed some suggestions below. Once you have formulated your ideas, or if you require some general or specific advice, please call us on **01892 515966** or simply send your ideas to [pettitts@btconnect.com](mailto:pettitts@btconnect.com).

**Relax** on the beaches of Goa or Kerala – both easily reached by air direct from Hyderabad. With a range of hotels to choose from both locations offer something for everyone and are an excellent way to end a tour. Time in Kerala could also be extended with a houseboat cruise on the backwaters.

**Discover** two magical retreats in the heart of Rajasthan. Chhatra Sagar, located on a dam overlooking a lake, or Shahpura Bagh, a colonial ancestral home offer a unique insight into the true India far removed from the hustle and bustle of the cities.

**Explore** and extend your stay in South India by travelling by air from Hyderabad to Chennai. The state of Tamil Nadu is a fascinating and diverse region of India highlighted by the French architecture of Pondicherry, Hindu temples of Tanjore and Chettinad merchant mansions which you will pass en-route.

The cost of the above 14 Day itinerary will be as follows:

1. **£4490.00 per person** based on twin sharing accommodation and World Traveller Class travel with British Airways.
2. Single Room Supplement **£1060 per person**

You may also wish to consider upgrading your World Traveller flights with British Airways to World Traveller Plus or Club World as follows.

\* The supplement, subject to availability, for World Traveller Plus would be **£380.00 per person** return. World Traveller Plus is a separate cabin, with fewer seats which provides a more spacious and relaxing environment. A wider seat with 38 inch legroom (compared to 31 inch in economy) and a good recline ensures you have a more comfortable flight.

\* The supplement, subject to availability, for Club World would be **£1590.00 per person** return. Club World offers an armchair style seat and footstool that convert to a 6 foot flat bed – a contemporary and more personalised meal service offering greater choice and flexibility- personal video screen – 18kg hand luggage allowance.

We are a licensed bonded Inclusive Tour Operator (ABTA V5041, ATOL 2841). The above price is a fully inclusive price covering all our services and is fully guaranteed against any surcharge for any reason once your deposit has been paid.

If you would like to proceed with the booking, we will require a deposit of 15% of the total cost, and this can be paid by cheque or credit / debit card. We are pleased to accept credit cards (Visa, Amex and MasterCard) or debit card (such as Maestro or Delta) over the telephone if this is more convenient for you. Pettitts do not charge a supplement on deposit payments by credit cards; however, balance or full payment is subject to a 1.5% charge towards the cost of the credit card issuers commission. There is no charge for any payment by debit card.

#### **Pre-existing medical conditions / Disabled passengers**

It is essential that you advise us before booking if you have any disability, pre-existing medical conditions or important dietary requirement that Pettitts should be made aware of before we accept responsibility for operating this itinerary to the countries named. We may request that you provide a letter from your doctor confirming your fitness to travel.

#### **For your peace of mind...**

If, within two weeks of your departure, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office issues a travel advisory advising against all, or non-essential, travel to a country where you are taking your holiday, Pettitts will do its best to offer you either a suitable alternative holiday or a full refund of all monies paid.

#### **Please note...**

This tour is based on a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 16 clients and we anticipate that it will be oversubscribed. However, if eight weeks or more before departure there are insufficient bookings we reserve the right to cancel the tour and you would receive an immediate full refund.

**Charles Allen** has agreed to lead this tour; however, in the unlikely event that he is unable to accompany this tour for whatever reason we reserve the right to arrange a suitable alternative leader. Whilst we do not anticipate any major changes to this itinerary, Charles Allen at his discretion, may adjust it to suit local conditions at the time.

**Driving times** – on major roads between towns and cities we will average approximately 40kms per hour, whilst on poorly surfaced roads, approximately 30kms per hour. These averages can vary considerably according to local conditions at the time.

**Hotels:** The journey from Hospet to Hyderabad is off the normal tourist trail and this is reflected in the varying standard of hotels. From basic in Hospet, Bijapur and Gulbarga to very comfortable in Mysore and luxurious at the Taj West End Hotel in Bangalore and the Taj Falaknuma Palace in Hyderabad. All the hotel rooms throughout have en suite facilities.

### **What's included...**

- \* The tour will be led by Mr Charles Allen together with the full time services of a tour escort and the services of local English speaking guides.
- \* World Traveller class travel to and from India using the scheduled services of British Airways using Boeing 747 / 777 series aircraft. Once issued, flight tickets are restricted for use only on the dates specified in the itinerary and are non-refundable.

*Please note that airlines are required by new laws to give border control agencies access to passenger data. Accordingly any information we hold about you and your travel arrangements may be disclosed to the customs and immigration authorities of any country in your itinerary.*

- \* Sightseeing and entrance fees.
- \* Between places you will travel by air-conditioned coach and economy class flight using the scheduled services of Kingfisher Airlines as shown in your itinerary.
- \* Accommodation as specified including hotel service charges and local taxes.
- \* Meals are based on a set menu basis as indicated in the above itinerary:

B=Breakfast  
L=Lunch  
D=Dinner

- \* All gratuities to drivers, porters and local guides in India.

### **Extras...**

- \* Travel insurance. It is a condition of your contract with Pettitts that every member of the party has full Travel Insurance which covers, specifically, medical treatment and emergency repatriation where appropriate, without any exclusion. Please note that we will need to know the name of your

insurers, your policy number and their emergency contact number before commencement of your holiday.

\* Cost of visas. Visas are required for India.

Visas for India must be arranged prior to travel through a visa service company. Application forms will be sent at the time of booking. The Indian authorities do not allow re-entry into India within two months of exit. You should be aware of this if you intend to visit India before or after your tour with us. Visitors to India must also leave 30 days after the expiry of a six-month Indian visa before they can apply for another Indian visa.

\* Any expenses of a personal nature, such as drinks, telephone calls, laundry, camera/video camera fees, meals (other than specified) etc.

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