

Southern hospitality—Indian-style

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Trivandrum, India—Tourists have invaded most of the South Sea lands, but they haven't yet discovered Trivandrum.

Where palm-tree-studded beaches, except for local fishermen, curve around the Arabian Sea to the Indian Ocean.

A contemporary beach resort hotel

opens its rooftop dining room to the sky while customers keep yoga and massage appointments 100 yards away.

Nearby, in the backwater canals of the state of Kerala, boys pole boatloads of passengers past scenic coconut-palm-fringed islands.

This is the lazy south of India, where tourists combine the exotic, overwhelming sights of India with a beach

vacation. Kerala has wildlife preserves, pagentry, and beach life, but few temples.

It is the land of the spice trade, from where Phoenician, Chinese, Persian and Portuguese sailors carried peacocks, ivory, incense and pepper to the western world. Strangely enough, few travelers have discovered it since.

Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India, and a mixed population of Christians, Jews, Arabs, Muslims and Hindus. The higher education level shows in daily life and in the children, although you are still in an exotic world.

An Indian Airlines Airbus-300 flies daily from the metropolis of Bombay down the 1,800-mile coast past Goa to Kerala's capital city, Trivandrum.

Women in saris, men in dhoti sarongs or shorts, children in brief skirts and shorts, surge slowly along the roads.

The city has the look and rhythm of India, with people crowding roads and jamming open-fronted shops on either side.

But here the rhythm is slower. A tailor threads a sewing machine in a doorway. Children walk barefoot to school and women cluster in doorways or carry pots and baskets on their heads. A water buffalo grazes, unaffected by the sounds of impatient motorists honking people, bullock carts and animals out of the way.

At the Kovalam Beach Resort, built by the government-sponsored India Tourism Development Corp., is a tiered concrete hotel on a curve of sand just out of town.

The resort specializes in yoga lessons and massages.

Some of the vacation highlights of the area include eight wildlife sanctuaries, festival pagentry of one kind or another throughout the year, a terrifying martial arts display of swords and whipping steel, and the incredible Kathakali dances.

Students spend years learning the song and dance of Kathakali and take several hours applying makeup for a single performance. During Hindu festivals, the story of the God Shiva (god of destruction and reproduction), and his wife Parvati takes several days.

Several hours may be too much for most foreigners, but it is a must as an artistic highlight of India. Class dancing of all kinds is the primary entertainment form offered by Indians to visitors.

For those who like to spend their Sundays on a lazy river, a poleboat up the backwaters is enough.

This is Dorothy Lamour, Tahiti, grass skirts and coconut palms, Indian-style. Small square-brick and thatched houses with palm dot coconut groves along the canal.

A woman bathes at the shore, her Kalli sarong wrapped around her like a bath towel. Children splash and wave the "ta, ta" of greeting.

Everything is mild here—a gentle breeze, the slow drift of the boat towards the sand-pit that separates the boat from the open sea, the trees bent seaward.

Under the trees, a family laughs and

jumps in a circle, playing the games of the family festival of Onam.

People are poor here as they are throughout India, and the area is less developed in many ways, but it seems easier to be poor when the land is gentle and productive and the weather mild beside a plentiful sea.

On the shore, in a village, women pull the fiber of coconut husk and a boy makes coil rope from it on a spinning wheel. This is the cottage industry of the area.

Clusters of women and children, families and old men greet travelers and stare as they walk under the high square houses reminiscent of the south seas.

A boy ties his ankles together and climbs a palm to the coconut cluster. A water buffalo is tied to a nearby tree.

Namaste. Namaste. That is the traditional greeting of India, a slight bow with the hands folded prayer-style under the chin. They respond, smiling, shy, waving, laughing gently at foreign ways. They see few tourists in their grove.

The children laugh hilariously at tourists who stop to talk to them during a local game of hand-and-foot ball. SOUTHERN INDIA provides a quiet vacation, without nightclubs. If tourists enter India through Bombay to the north, there is plenty of opportunity for discos, rooftop bars and other contemporary musical entertainments.



ABOVE: Religion-oriented multiple carvings on seventh century monument at Mahabalipuram shows free-rein given its creator. INSET: Woman of village near Trivandrum making palm-thatched roofing. BELOW: A group of boys take tourists up palm-tree-lined backwaters of Kerala. (Photos by Micky Jones)



TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones



Another myth shattered

The American women's climbing team was there above us on Annapurna, but we couldn't see the mountain through the clouds from the Chinese Road in Nepal.

G.E.N. Pradhan, Nepal's minister of tourism, had told us about the Americans' hike to the base camp, the first all-woman team to attempt the 26,500-foot peak.

During a meeting with Nepal's Prime Minister Kirtinidhi Bista, he had commented on the bravery of this team, led by 35-year-old Arlene Blum of Berkeley, Calif.

But it was the English trekking guide who put the expedition into focus. Trekking is a major tourist activity in Nepal. This mountain-leathered man had gone from the British army to trekking many years ago, and now he looks like part of the mountain himself.

"It's a tough mountain," he said. "And they don't have a lot of experience between them. But today they reached the base camp, and we're keeping our fingers crossed."

Finger-crossing was in order. Two Japanese climbers had fallen to their death a few days before.

We had been packing up an overnight camp when this conversation took place. It was Himalayan camping, but we were still on green hills near Katmandu, under a 19,000-foot snowless peak.

This is the kind of camp trekkers set up for one- or two-week hikes, with trained guides, walking all day and sleeping in totally enclosed pup tents at night.

We were in Nepal several days, but had not seen Everest or any of the other high peaks, because the high mountains are not usually visible from May to September, especially from Katmandu Valley.

We took an all-day bus ride to the small city of Pokhara, at the foot of Annapurna, to increase our chances of seeing the mountains. There were daily, \$35 morning flights from Katmandu to Everest, but the mighty mountain had eluded them for the previous three days.

The bus to Pokhara followed a two-lane highway, through valleys of abundant rice crops. We passed road construction crews, where they huddled rocks with shovels into sacks carried on the backs of exceptionally young workers.

Within two hours, we joined the Chinese Road, built by the Chinese to the Tibetan border.

As we approached the Pokhara Valley, we strained for sight of the mountain. There were high green mountains, and clouds of equal height above them. We knew the mountains were behind those peaks, but we didn't know if we would ever see them.

SUDDENLY, SOMEBODY said: "Oh my God, it's above the clouds." There, rising above the high white, glacier-like clouds, was the tip of the holy mountain. Annapurna is a range of mountains. This first sighted peak is the holy mountain that no man or woman is permitted to scale. There are several other peaks. The American women were one of them.

We finished our drive through villages and then poled across the river to the lodge for the night.

Everything here is geared for mountain viewing. At sunset, we sat on the lawn with drinks and tea and watched heaven unveil the Annapurna peaks.

All the world in color at DIA

Color footage of enchanting Austria will be shown by world traveler Curtis Nagel of California when he opens the 1978-79 World Adventure Series season of 2-30 p.m. Sunday travel shows Oct. 29 at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Nagel's subject, "Serenade to Austria," is one of 22 showings scheduled through April 15, and is delivered by on-the-spot recordings of concerts by the costumed Vienna Boys Choir and seductive Strauss waltzes at outdoor cafes.

"The Paris We Love" will make its Detroit debut the following Sunday. English-born globetrotter Robin Williams will show his new color movies of this popular city. Williams films the horseback Republican Guard in Napoleonic costume, the Arc de Triomphe, the celebrated, tree-lined Champs Elysees, the world's loveliest sculptures of the Place de la Concorde and the treasures of the Louvre. Williams films everything, from girl watching at the famed sidewalk cafe Deux Magots, to the swank Longchamps race track.

The third series attraction on Nov. 12 is "Israel and the Sinai." William Stockdale, speaker-photographer, is a New Englander, a Yale graduate majoring in journalism and a frequent contributor to the New York Times.

Among the highlights are the West Bank, the Golan Heights, a trip by Arab bus to the Arab stronghold of Hebron, near the Lebanon border, the Jordan and Sea of Galilee, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Bethlehem, all major Biblical cities, the Dead Sea and an overnight visit in a kibbutz guest house.

For a free brochure on the World Adventure Series shows write Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Avenue, Detroit 48202; 833-1676. The institute is open from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily.

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