



KarmaQuest Ecotourism and Adventure Travel

The Colors of South India A Women's Tour with Christina Wilson and Wendy Lama January 9-24, 2017



South India is a marvel of senses, a multiplicity of cultures, a collage of landscapes, and a menagerie of wildlife, legends and deities that has drawn travelers since the dawn of South Asian civilizations, some **4000 years ago**. On this trip, we'll visit some of the classic must sees – the **famous rock temples** of Mahabalipuram, the **architectural wonders** of Madurai said to nearly rival the Taj Mahal, and the **classical dance, music and arts** of Kochi and Chennai; we'll float down the quiet waterways of **Kerala's backwaters** where life passes at the pace of a floating leaf, visit a **homestay family** at riverside, overnight on a houseboat and track wildlife at **Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary**.

The itinerary has been planned to give you a taste of South India's ancient cultures, arts, and history – as well as colorful spice, flower, vegetable and textile bazaars, the heart of urban life -- at a **relaxing pace** that allows you to discover some of your own treasures in this rich tapestry of life. We'll spend **two to three nights at most destinations**. We'll also **spend time with local women**: joining village women in the kitchen at Pongal Festival in Madurai and with our homestay hostesses in Kumarakom. We'll go back stage at cultural dance performances and visit a **social service project** site where our contributions can help **uplift disadvantaged women**. We'll seek out women leaders with whom we'll gain insight into a woman's world in India.



Please join **Wendy Brewer Lama and Christina Wilson** on a continuing series of women's travel experiences in Asia. Women-to-women, we seek to build friendships across the world, and to nurture a sense of comradery and ease among our returning and new trip members.

"I felt safe, secure and content the whole time, even before we left thanks to your attention to detail." D. Paul, 2014

(Photo above: "My life is my message," Mahatma Gandhi, at his ashram in India.)

To sign up, please contact Nancy Pole Wilhite at
Terra Nova Travel, LLC, 2154 NW Aspen Ave, Portland OR 97210
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Email: nancy@terranovatour.com www.terranovatour.com





Itinerary

Day 1 – January 9 (Monday): Arrive in Chennai (Madras)

You'll be met on arrival at the international airport and transferred to your hotel. Overnight at the Vivanta by Taj Connemara or similar, Chennai. No meals included. **-/-**

Day 2 – January 10 (Tuesday): Chennai: Full day sightseeing in Chennai

Chennai was the site of the first British settlement of the British East India Company. Today it is the capital of Tamil Nadu State, with a population of over 5 million. We'll visit the 17th century **Fort St. George**, from where Chennai grew as an early "Factory House" on the beach, now housing government offices; **St Mary's Church**, India's first English church, completed in 1680, with cannon-proof roofs and 1.3 m thick walls; vast and lengthy **Marina Beach** (*photo right*); **Santhome Cathedral**, which houses the remains of St. Thomas the Apostle; **Kapaleeshwarar Temple**, a 16th century Shiva temple; and the Bronze Gallery of the **Government Museum**, among other highlights.

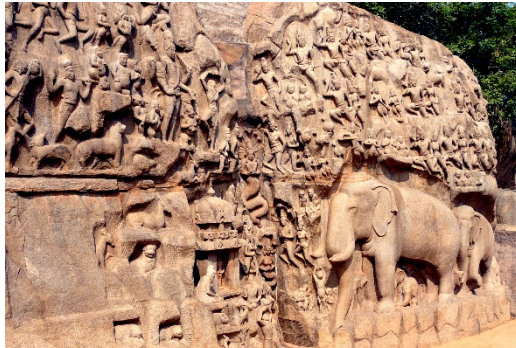


To take the edge off the city bustle, we'll also stroll through the **Huddleston Gardens** of the Theosophical Society of India: over 260 acres housing a myriad of birds and wildlife, and a 450-year-old banyan tree with aerial roots covering 60,000 square meters. Overnight at the Vivanta by Taj Connemara or similar, Chennai. **B/-**

Day 3 – January 11 (Wednesday) Morning visit to Kalakshetra, an international center of **classical dance music and fine arts** (*dancer photo right*) founded by Rukmini Devi Irondale. In the afternoon, we'll go on a **guided walking tour** of one of Chennai's fascinating neighborhoods and hear the stories behind the sites. Overnight at the Vivanta by Taj Connemara or similar, Chennai.



B/-



Day 4 – January 12 (Thursday)

Chennai/Kanchipuram/Mahabalipuram/Covelong

Morning drive (approx 2 hrs) to **Kanchipuram**, a spectacular temple city dating back to the **2nd century**. Capital city of the Pallavas, and for successive dynasties, this ancient city is one of the seven **most sacred sites in India**. It is also known for its **handloom industry**. The exquisite silk saris and cloths made from mulberry silk yarn are world famous and the best in the country (and available for sale here). Also visit Kanchikudil Heritage House, a hundred year old house outfitted by items from that period. Drive another 2 hours to **Mahabalipuram** with its innumerable imposing rock-cut sculptures and temples -- a **UNESCO World Heritage** site. Continue a short distance to **Covelong, a beach-side resort**. Overnight at the Vivanta by Taj Fisherman's Cove or similar, Covelong. **B/-/-**

Day 5 – January 13 (Friday) Covelong/Chennai/Madurai

Morning at leisure to **stroll on the beach**. Then drive (approx 1 hour) to Chennai airport and fly to Madurai. Relax at your hotel and in the evening, visit the **flower market**, famous for jasmine and lilies. Later proceed to witness a "wedding ceremony" of Shiva and Meenakshi (Parvati) at the **Sri Meenakshi Temple**, accompanied by Tamil Nadu style horns and drums. Overnight at the Gateway Hotel Taj Pasumalai or similar, Madurai. **B/-/-**



Day 6 – January 14 (Saturday) Madurai: Pongal Festival

Madurai is often referred as the Athens of the East, and the cradle of Tamil culture. It is also the thriving pulse of Tamil Nadu's industrial growth. Situated on the banks of river Vaigai, Madurai is more than 2,500 years old and was an important cultural and commercial center as early as 550 AD, when it was the capital city for the Pandya kings.

This day marks the main day of the famous festival of Tamil Nadu "**Pongal**," a harvest festival celebrated at the end of the farming season. Pongal also marks the beginning of the northward journey of the sun from its southernmost-limit and coincides with the winter harvest festival. **We'll join a village to prepare traditional foods** such as a special sweet dish made of rice called "pongal," making offerings to the sun god, decorating the home door step and dressing in sari for the occasion (provided). Later return to the hotel. Overnight at the Gateway Hotel Taj Pasumalai or similar, Madurai. **B/- /-**



Day 7 – January 15 (Sunday) Madurai: Pongal Activities

In the morning we'll witness a traditional "bull fight" or **cattle wrestling** event (subject to confirmation), then proceed for a **city tour** visiting **Tirumalai Nayak Mahal Palace**, built in 1636 in the Indo-Mughal style with numerous domes, arches and ornate stucco work; and other note-worthy monuments and sights including the **Sri Meenakshi Sundareswar Temple – contemporary with the Taj Mahal** in Agra, with 4,000 granite sculptures, imposing towers, and the "Tank of the Golden Lotus."

Overnight at the Gateway Hotel Taj Pasumalai or similar, Madurai.

B/-/-

Day 8 -- January 16 (Monday) Madurai – Thekkady/Periyar

After breakfast, drive into the cool lush hills, and to lakeside Thekkady at 800 m/2624 ft. (about 4 hours). En-route visit the Ayyanar temple, paddy fields, and Dhobighat. Check in at the **Spice Village Resort**. The grounds of this magnificent spot merge with the spice gardens and the verdant landscape bordering the **Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary and Tiger Reserve**. Afternoon is free for exploring on your own. A spa and yoga center offers massages and Ayurveda treatments. Settle in for two nights at the Spice Village or similar, Periyar.

B/-/-

Day 9 – January 17 (Tuesday): Spice Plantations of Thekkady and Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary

Covering an area of 300 square miles Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary is the home of wild elephants, sambar (a large antlered deer), wild boar, barking deer, leopard, bison, monkeys, Malabar squirrel, and the Royal Bengal Tiger, protected through Project Tiger since 1973. Rise early for a morning **boat ride with a naturalist** on the lake when birds and wildlife are best viewed. Return to the resort for breakfast. **Tour nearby plantations** of cardamom, pepper, and tea (*photo above*). Overnight at the Spice Village or similar, Periyar.



B/-/-

Day 10 – January 18 (Wednesday) Kumarakom Family Homestay

Morning drive to Kumarakom (approx. 3 hours). On arrival check into your **family homestay** accommodation in Kumarakom. Spend two nights in a comfortable villa twin-sharing homestay on the river. Spend the rest of the day at your leisure, or partaking in some of the below listed activities. Overnight at Philipkutty's Farm or similar, Kumarakom.

B/L/D

Day 11 – January 19 (Thursday) Kumarakom Family Homestay

Today is unplanned, subject to your whim. You might enjoy cooking or participating in other day to day activities with the family members, or taking village walks, biking or boating. Note: some activities may incur an extra charge. Philipkutty's Farm or similar, Kumarakom.

B/L/D



Day 12 – January 20 (Friday) Kumarakom/Alleppey



After breakfast, depart to Alleppey (approx. 1.5 hour drive) where you will board a **private back-water houseboat**. Also known as *kettuvallam* or rice boats (*left*), these vessels were used to carry rice bags in the earlier days. They are uniquely designed using local materials such as bamboo poles, coconut finer ropes, bamboo mats, and carpets and have been re-furnished as houseboats. Our boat will have **sleeping quarters fully furnished with attached bathroom**, a balcony with

comfortable chairs, a fully equipped kitchen and an experienced cook to prepare authentic **Kerala cuisine** with seafood specialties and fresh vegetables. During the cruise, we'll stop and **visit villages** to see toddy tapping, coir making, rice fields, fishing and local events: one never know when a procession might go by! Overnight on a premium houseboat, Alleppey. **B/L/D**

Day 13 – January 21 (Saturday) Alleppey/Cochin

After breakfast drive to Cochin/Kochi. On arrival check into the hotel. Enjoy free time at your leisure. Overnight at the Malabar House or similar, Cochin. **B/-/-**

Day 14 – January 22 (Sunday) Cochin

Today we'll have a half day of sightseeing taking in the city's highlights, including the **Kochi Fort**, founded in 1503 by the Portuguese, is now in ruins but for a plaque commemorating the arrival of Vasco Da Gama in 1500. The Portuguese also built **Mattancherry Palace** in 1557 as a gift for the Raja of Kochi in exchange for trading rights. In 1663, the Dutch substantially



rebuilt it. Rooms contain furnishings of royalty. Visit the **Jewish synagogue**

is in Mattancherry amidst a **thriving antique market**. The Jews have claimed to have settled here in 587 BC and some legends trace the origin to King Solomon in 1030 BC. Walk along the beach and watch the fisherman dip their nets into the water from a skeleton structure -- most picturesque at dawn and sunset (*above right*). Explore on your own in the afternoon. In the evening, we'll attend the colorful **Kathakali dance performance** with behind the scenes look at the dancers as they prepare for this lively performance (*photo left*). Overnight at the Malabar House or similar, Cochin. **B/-/-**





Day 15 –January 23 (Monday) Cochin

Today we'll have a guided walking tour of **Old Kochi**. Stroll Kochi's colorful **back lanes**: a shopper's delight. We'll take in **Jews town and the spice markets**, with afternoon time to rest before a **Farewell Lunch or Dinner** and early to bed for an early departure tomorrow. **B/L or D**

Day 16 – January 24 (Tuesday) Depart Cochin

Rise early to catch your international flight, or connect on a domestic flight for your optional extension trip (see below). Check out time is noon. Assistance on departure at the hotel and transfer to airport. **B/-/-**

End of Services

Trip Price: \$8,920/person for a group of 6 to 8 persons

(Based on half twin sharing basis without domestic flights)

Minimum group size: 6 / Maximum group size: 10

Single supplement room charge (optional): \$2,690

Supplement for domestic flight (Chennai to Madurai): \$210

(Flight price subject to change depending upon the fuel surcharge at the time of ticket purchase.)



Deposit and full payment are accepted by check payable to Terra Nova Travel, LLC, wire transfer or credit card (Visa, Master Card or Am Express). . If you wish to pay your land package and domestic airfare (within India) by check or wire transfer, we are happy to deduct the credit card company processing charges (average 4%) from your trip total. We feel it is important to identify just how much you are paying in credit card charges and ultimately leave the decision in your hands.

Tour cost includes:

- * Accommodation on twin sharing bed and breakfast basis (i.e., all breakfasts included as noted).
- * Accommodation on full board basis at the family homestay and on the house boat.
- * A special Farewell Lunch or Dinner
- * All transportation services using an air conditioned spacious vehicle with driver, with rickshaw ride to visit the Meenakshi temple in Madurai
- * KarmaQuest Director Wendy Lama as Trip Leader, as well as local English speaking guides
- * Monument entrance fees including Kalakshetra visit as per the itinerary
- * Exclusive traditional Pongal program at Madurai
- * Boat ride and entry fees at Lake Periyar
- * Kathakali show in Kochi
- * Tips for local and special guides, drivers and hotel/airport service staff
- * A beautiful customized trip journal with maps, diary pages, language tips, and much more.



Tour cost does not include:

- * International airfare to and from India, and hotel/services en route
- * Domestic airfare (estimated at \$210)
- * India visa fee and processing fee
- * Airport departure tax (included in most air tickets)
- * Expenses of a personal nature e.g., laundry, phone calls, camera charges, excess baggage, etc.
- * Tips at meals, room service or for requested personalized services
- * Meals not included in itinerary (generally dinner and lunches)
- * All beverages, including drinks at included meals
- * Early check-in and late check-out
- * Transportation, sightseeing and entry fees for independent exploration during free time
- * Trip cancellation insurance (optional)
- * Medical and emergency evacuation travel insurance (mandatory)
- * Temple and social service donations (individual and group)
- * Any expenses caused by reasons beyond our and our associate offices' control such as flight delays, rescheduling or cancellations, any accidents, medical evacuation riots, strikes, political unrest, natural disasters, etc.
- * Any other taxes or service charges that could be enforced during the travel period
- * Any other expenses not specified above in the "included" section above.

Regarding Bookings, Deposits, Cancellations and Refunds

A deposit is required in order to secure your place on this special trip. A non-refundable deposit of \$1,800 must be received by Terra Nova Travel by **March 27, 2016** to secure your booking. Final payment must be made by **September 15, 2016**. For bookings made within 90 days of trip departure, the entire cost of the trip is due immediately. Subsequent bookings will be accepted based upon availability. Final payment must be made by **September 15, 2016**. For bookings made within 90 days of trip departure, the entire cost of the trip is due immediately.

Cancellations and Refunds

If it becomes necessary for you to cancel your trip, please notify us immediately in writing, preferably by fax. If you cancel any portion of the trip while in progress or do not avail of any planned services, there is no refund. We strongly suggest that you take travelers' insurance to cover unforeseen cancellations. A full cancellation policy will be given at time of booking.

Trip prior to departure	Cancellation fee
Any time after booking	\$1,800
60 to 90 days	30% of total land cost (including \$1,500)
30 to 59 days	50% of total land cost ""
1 to 29 days	100% of total land cost ""



South India Weather/Temperatures in January-February

Chennai and Cochin and the coastal areas to their south will be in mid to high 80s to low 90s during the daytime and mid-60s and 70s at night. In Madurai expect daytime temperatures in the low 70s to 80s, cooler at night. It will be cooler (high 40s to low-60s) in the highlands (Thekkady).

Single Supplements

On this trip, unlike on past Christina Wilson-KarmaQuest-Terra Nova trips, we will not include a “rotating single” room which allowed someone to occasionally have a single room (on rotation, or on special request due to illness, etc.). We have found that people prefer to have the same roommate, or have a single room throughout the entire trip. Single accommodations can be requested by those who wish to room alone, and will be subject to availability at the time of booking. The single supplement charge reflects the prices that Indian hotels charge for occupying a single room vs sharing a room. If you wish to share a room and do not have a travel companion with whom to share, we will inform you of others among the group members who also wish to share a room and invite you to contact them. If you choose not to or are unable to share, you will be responsible for the single supplement charge.

Accommodations, Travel Conditions, Services and Expectations

Hotels chosen are generally equivalent to three to four+ star standard (within India’s hotel standard rating system). Several are of the excellent Taj hotel line in India. Others are smaller and lovely boutique or heritage hotels. Homestay facilities are villa style (separate buildings from the family home), and the houseboat is deluxe with air conditioning. All are selected to provide you a very comfortable and safe environment that reflects India’s unique cultural flavour as well as for their optimal locations. Occasionally, due to circumstances beyond our control, the selected hotel or the preferred room standard is not available. Every effort will be made to provide the utmost level of comfort and satisfaction at all times.

In general the check-in and check-out times at all hotels, unless otherwise stated in this itinerary, is between 1200 noon and 1400 hours. Whenever possible, we will arrange for suitable locations for rest and respite should flight schedules and the itinerary require otherwise.

Roads travelled on this trip are generally paved and well maintained. Some overland travel in rural settings may be on unpaved roads. Travel to and from Periyar involves some curvy hillside roads. All roads are subject to construction or other interruptions.

Your safety and comfort are our utmost priority. Travelers will likely be pleasantly surprised at the level of hospitality afforded. We encourage you to maintain a spirit of adventure and readiness for unanticipated opportunities and change of plans. Our follow-up pre-departure information will provide additional tips for traveling, packing, and knowing what to expect.



Social Service Program

In keeping with the tradition of supporting social services in the countries we visit, this trip will feature the opportunity for trip members to visit and contribute to a social service program in India. We will provide additional information about the program and how we can contribute at a later time.

Optional Extensions

We would be happy to help you design a customized pre- or post-trip trip extension for you within India or the region. Please inquire. Some suggestions for two or more day extension trips are:

- * **Marari Beach Resort, south of Cochin:** A coastal resort 1.5 hours' drive south of Cochin/Kochi. Spend your days at leisure, exploring the beaches and nearby villages or enjoying an Ayurveda massage or spa treatment. Optional activities include games and sports, yoga, bicycling or wandering to nearby villages to meet local fishermen, farmers or women shopkeepers.
- * **Mumbai, and the Ajanta and Ellora caves:** Fly a short distance to cosmopolitan Mumbai and take a one day sightseeing tour of this fascinating historical city on the sea. Then fly to Aurangabad for an unforgettable two day guided tour of the incredible UNESCO World Heritage site caves at Ajanta and Ellora, adorned with Buddhist and Hindu frescoes and statues from pre-BC times to the 5th century AD.
- * **Delhi, Varanasi, and Bodhgaya:** Fly to Delhi (or skip it and fly directly to an airport serving Varanasi or Bodhgaya) to explore these important pilgrimage places for Hindus and Buddhists: Varanasi, where Hindus honor their dead on the shores of the Ganges River, and Bodhgaya where Buddha attained enlightenment, and nearby Sarnath where he gave his first teaching.
- * **Goa:** Spend some time at a fabulous spa resort, enjoying the warm beaches and the colorful historic Portuguese communities and churches of Goa, a bit of Europe in India.

Profiles of Key Trip Personnel

Christina Wilson, Trip Organizer

Christina has been interested in traveling her entire life. In 1982 she took her first trip to Nepal and India. Since then, she has been going to every exotic place she can find in the world. Her goal is to visit all the interesting places including her own back yard during her lifetime.

Christina worked with Outward Bound for many years and it was there, putting women's trips together, that she found her passion. Outward Bound taught her that it was the journey, not the destination that was important; and about the importance of giving back to the community that she visits. The trips she puts together always include a service project or a contribution to a local organization.

Christina has led many trips all over the world. Her trips are usually small so that the group travels intimately and easily. For the last twenty years she has led many groups to interesting places,

including Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Italy, England, Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, Thailand, Burma, Micronesia, Bali, and Indonesia, to name a few. Her most recent trips, operated by KarmaQuest, are with a small group of women who toured Laos and Vietnam in February 2009, North India in January 2011 and Burma in 2014. Christina is on the Board of Trustees of the National Tropical Botanical Gardens. She led her third trip for NTBG in November 2008 to Madagascar and South Africa and most recently on the NTBG-sponsored Amazon cruise led by NTBG Fellow and former head of Kew Gardens, Sir Ghilliean Prance.

Please contact Christina Wilson with general questions about the trip.

Tel: (503) 297-3234 or bumpus@pacifier.com



Wendy Brewer Lama, On-the-Trip Manager and Director of KarmaQuest Ecotourism and Adventure Travel

KarmaQuest Ecotourism and Adventure Travel founders Wendy and Karma Lama have been organizing special interest, educational, adventure, eco-, and cultural trips to Asia for more than 20 years. KarmaQuest trips visit: Nepal, India, Bhutan, China (and Tibet), Thailand, Burma, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia.

KarmaQuest's unique and award winning trips draw upon the expertise and relationships Wendy Lama has nurtured as an Ecotourism Specialist for international organizations since the 1980s. She has worked throughout the Himalayan region for The Mountain Institute to manage the impacts of tourism and to promote conservation of natural and cultural resources and improved local livelihoods through ecotourism.

She developed an ecotourism management plan in support of panda conservation in Wanglang Nature Reserve for the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF) in Sichuan, China. She helped develop a tourism master plan for Central Tibet for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and trained Tibetans in participatory ecotourism planning.

In Kyrgyzstan, Wendy assisted women's groups and tour operators in the beginning stages of a successful Community-Based Tourism (CBT) initiative that is now a standard for Central Asia and beyond. She advised the UNESCO Cultural and Ecotourism in Mountain Regions of Central and South Asia program in Iran, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, India, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. She has also advised tourism development in Mongolia and Siberia.

Besides planning and operating KarmaQuest trips, she has introduced ecotourism to farmers, fisher-people, wineries, nurseries, and Main Street entrepreneurs in Half Moon Bay.

KarmaQuest designs and operates customized ecotourism and adventure travel for individual and group travelers as well as organizations and universities. This is the eleventh trip it has organized in collaboration with Christina Wilson and Terra Nova Travel, LLC. KarmaQuest Ecotourism and Adventure Travel (www.karmaquests.com) is based in Half Moon Bay, California.



Nancy Pole-Wilhite, Travel Resource Person, Terra Nova Travel, LLC

Nancy has worked as a travel consultant since 1978 specializing in exotic destinations. Since 1999 she has been an independent agent/trip designer operating her own company, Terra Nova Travel, LLC. Her keen interest in adventure travel and endangered cultures lead to her connection with Christina Wilson. For the last fifteen years she and Christina have collaborated on such trips as Baja kayaking, a trek to Machu Picchu, and NTB Friends' trips to Bhutan in 2002, Thailand/ Myanmar in 2004 (with KarmaQuest), Madagascar/South Africa in November 2008, and an Amazon River cruise in June 2009.

From 2009-2014, Nancy and Karma Quest have organized with Christina a series of women's trips with a cultural/textile theme to Laos/Vietnam, Northern India and most recently to Burma.

As a South American specialist, Nancy's south of the border explorations have led her to Iguassu Falls and Buenos Aires to research a visual arts tour for a Portland art gallery, to the altiplano of Peru and Bolivia and in Oct 2013 to the Galapagos for a week aboard a schooner, the Mary Anne. Bit by the Africa bug, she has recently visited the wilds of Madagascar, traveled to both Uganda and Rwanda to see the famous mountain gorillas, and spent 3 ½ weeks on safari exploring Tanzania and Northern Kenya which included a walking safari with the Samburu tribe. Her expertise also extends to Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, SE Asia, China, France, Italy, Spain as well as Africa, and South America.

Nancy has a BA from the University of California at Berkeley in English Literature and French. Her passion for Renaissance literature and art extends into the music world. For the past twenty five years she has been a member of the liturgical choir, Cantores in Ecclesia www.cantoresinecclesia.org. Cantores is devoted to the performance of polyphonic music from the Renaissance as well as Gregorian Chant. Nancy also currently serves on the Board of the women's *a capella* group, In Mulieribus (www.inmulieribus.org). She enjoys cooking French and ethnic foods, as well as gardening.

Please contact Nancy Pole-Wilhite to book the trip, and for questions and assistance in pre-trip tour logistics, including flight bookings, the day to day itinerary, extensions, and other general travel questions.

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Projection: Lambert Conical Orthomorphic.

The boundary of Meghalaya shown on this map is as interpreted from the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act 1971, but

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