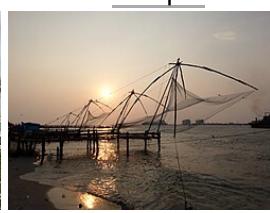




Kerala

Kerala (English: /'kərələ/ ⓘ *KERR-ə-lə*, Malayalam: ['ke:rləm] ⓘ) is a state on the Malabar Coast of India. It was formed on 1 November 1956, following the passage of the States Reorganisation Act, by combining Malayalam-speaking regions of the erstwhile regions of Cochin, Malabar, South Canara, and Travancore.^{[16][17]} Spread over 38,863 km² (15,005 sq mi), Kerala is the 14th smallest Indian state by area. It is bordered by Karnataka to the north and northeast, Tamil Nadu to the east and south, and the Lakshadweep Sea^[18] to the west. With 33 million inhabitants as per the 2011 census, Kerala is the 13th-largest Indian state by population. It is divided into 14 districts with the capital being Thiruvananthapuram. Malayalam is the most widely spoken language and is also the official language of the state.^[19]

The Chera dynasty was the first prominent kingdom based in Kerala. The Ay kingdom in the deep south and the Ezhimala kingdom in the north formed the other kingdoms in the early years of the Common Era (CE). The region had been a prominent spice exporter since 3000 BCE.^[20] The region's prominence in trade was noted in the works of Pliny as well as the Periplus around 100 CE. In the 15th century, the spice trade attracted Portuguese traders to Kerala, and paved the way for European colonisation of India. At the time of Indian independence movement in the early 20th century, there were two major princely states in Kerala: Travancore and Cochin. They united to form the state of Thiru-Kochi in 1949. The Malabar region, in the northern part of Kerala, had been a part of the Madras province of British India, which later became a part of the Madras State post-independence. After the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, the modern-day state of Kerala was formed by merging the Malabar district of Madras State (excluding Gudalur taluk of Nilgiris district, Lakshadweep Islands, Topslip, the Attappadi Forest east of Anakatti), the taluk of Kasaragod (now Kasaragod District) in South Canara, and the erstwhile state of Thiru-Kochi (excluding four southern taluks of Kanyakumari district, and Shenkottai taluks).^[17]

Kerala	
State	
	Athirappilly Falls
	Kerala backwaters
	Munnar
	Jatayu Earth's Center
	Padmanabhaswamy Temple
	Kerala Government Secretariat
	Fort Kochi Beach
	Emblem of Kerala
Etymology: Land of 'Cheras' or Land of coconut trees	
Nickname: "God's own country"	
Motto: Satyameva Jayate (Truth alone triumphs)	

Kerala has the lowest positive population growth rate in India, 3.44%; the highest [Human Development Index](#) (HDI), 0.784 in 2018 (0.712 in 2015); the highest [literacy](#) rate, 96.2% in the 2018 literacy survey conducted by the National Statistical Office, India;^[11] the highest life expectancy, 77.3 years; and the highest [sex ratio](#), 1,084 women per 1,000 men. Kerala is the least impoverished state in India according to [NITI Aayog's Sustainable Development Goals dashboard](#) and [Reserve Bank of India's Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy](#).^{[21][22]} Kerala is the second-most urbanised major state in the country with 47.7% urban population according to the [2011 Census of India](#).^[23] The state topped in the country to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals according to the annual report of [NITI Aayog](#) published in 2019.^[24] The state has the highest media exposure in India with newspapers publishing in nine languages, mainly [Malayalam](#) and sometimes [English](#). [Hinduism](#) is practised by more than half of the population, followed by [Islam](#) and [Christianity](#).

In 2019–20, the economy of Kerala was the 8th-largest in India with ₹8.55 trillion (US\$100 billion) in gross state domestic product (GSDP) and a per capita net state domestic product of ₹222,000 (US\$2,600).^[25] In 2019–20, the tertiary sector contributed around 65% to state's [GSVA](#), while the primary sector contributed only 8%.^[26] The state has witnessed significant emigration, especially to the [Arab states of the Persian Gulf](#) during the [Gulf Boom](#) of the 1970s and early 1980s, and its economy depends significantly on [remittances](#) from a large [Malayali](#) expatriate community. The production of [pepper](#) and [natural rubber](#) contributes significantly to the total national output. In the agricultural sector, [coconut](#), [tea](#), [coffee](#), [cashew](#) and [spices](#) are important. The state is situated between [Arabian Sea](#) to the west and [Western Ghats](#) mountain ranges to the east. The state's coastline extends for 595 kilometres (370 mi), and around 1.1 million people in the state are dependent on the fishery industry, which contributes 3% to the state's income. Named as one of the ten paradises of the world by [National Geographic Traveler](#),^[27] Kerala is one of the prominent [tourist destinations](#) of India, with [coconut-lined sandy beaches](#), [backwaters](#), [hill stations](#), [Ayurvedic tourism](#) and [tropical greenery](#) as its major attractions.



Location of Kerala in India

Coordinates: 10.0°N 76.3°E

Country	India
Region	South India
Before was	Travancore–Cochin Malabar District South Canara
Formation	1 November 1956
Capital	Thiruvananthapuram
Districts	14
Government	
• Body	Government of Kerala
• Governor	Rajendra Arlekar
• Chief minister	Pinarayi Vijayan (CPI(M))
• Chief secretary	Sharada Muraleedharan, IAS
State Legislature	Unicameral
• Assembly	Kerala Legislative Assembly (140 seats)
National Parliament	Parliament of India
• Rajya Sabha	9 seats
• Lok Sabha	20 seats
High Court	Kerala High Court
Area^[1]	
• Total	38,863 km ² (15,005 sq mi)
• Rank	21st
Dimensions	
• Length	560 km (350 mi)
• Width	70 km (40 mi)
Elevation^[2]	900 m (3,000 ft)

Etymology

The word *Kerala* is first recorded as *Keralaputo* ('son of *Chera* [s]') in a 3rd-century-BCE rock inscription left by the *Maurya* emperor *Ashoka* (274–237 BCE), one of his edicts pertaining to welfare.^[28] At that time, one of three states in the region was called *Cheralam* in Classical Tamil: *Chera* and *Kera* are variants of the same word.^[29] The word *Cheral* refers to the oldest known dynasty of Kerala kings and is derived from the Old Tamil word for 'lake'.^[30] *Keralam* may stem from the Classical Tamil *cherive-alam* 'declivity of a hill or a mountain slope'^[31] or *chera alam* 'land of the Cheras'. One folk etymology derives *Kerala* from the Malayalam word *kera* 'coconut tree' and *alam* 'land'; thus, 'land of coconuts',^[32] which is a nickname for the state used by locals due to the abundance of coconut trees.^[33] Kerala was alternatively called *Malabar* in the foreign trade circles. From the time of *Cosmas Indicopleustes* (6th century CE) itself, the Arab sailors used to call Kerala *Male*.

History

Kerala was first epigraphically recorded as *Cheras* (*Keralaputra*) in a 3rd-century BCE rock inscription by the *Mauryan* emperor *Ashoka* of *Magadha*.^[34] It was mentioned as one of four independent kingdoms in southern India during Ashoka's time, the others being the *Cholas*, *Pandyas* and *Satyaputras*.^[35] The *Cheras* transformed Kerala into an international trade centre by establishing trade relations across the *Arabian Sea* with all major *Mediterranean* and *Red Sea* ports as well those of *Eastern Africa* and the *Far East*.^[36] The dominion of *Cheras* was located in one of the key routes of the ancient *Indian Ocean* trade. The early *Cheras* collapsed after repeated attacks from the neighboring *Cholas* and *Rashtrakutas*.

In the 8th century, *Adi Shankara* was born in *Kalady* in central Kerala. He travelled extensively across the Indian subcontinent founding institutions of the widely influential philosophy of *Advaita Vedanta*. The *Cheras* regained control over Kerala in the 9th century until the kingdom was dissolved in the 12th century, after which small autonomous chiefdoms, most notably the *Kingdom of Kozhikode*, arose. The ports of *Kozhikode*

Highest elevation (Anamudi ^[3])	2,695 m (8,842 ft)
Lowest elevation (Kuttanad ^[4])	-2.7 m (-8.9 ft)
Population (2018) ^[5]	
• Total	34,630,192
• Rank	13th
• Density	890/km ² (2,300/sq mi)
• Urban	47.7%
• Rural	52.3%
Demonym(s)	Keralite, Malayali
Language	
• Official	Malayalam ^[6]
• Additional official	English ^{[7][8]}
• Official script	Malayalam script
GDP ^[9]	
• Total (2024-25)	▲ ₹1,275,412 crore (US\$150 billion)
• Rank	11th
• Per capita	▲ ₹317,723 (US\$3,800) (11th)
Time zone	UTC+05:30 (IST)
ISO 3166 code	IN-KL
Vehicle registration	KL
HDI (2024)	▲ 0.814 High ^[10] (1st)
Literacy (2018)	▲ 96.2% ^[11] (1st)
Sex ratio (2011)	1084 ♀/1000 ♂ ^[12] (17th)
Website	kerala.gov.in (http://kerala.gov.in)
Symbols of Kerala	
	
Emblem of Kerala	
Foundation day	1 November
Bird	Great hornbill ^[13]
Butterfly	<i>Papilio buddha</i> ^[14]
Fish	Green chromide
Flower	Golden shower tree ^[13]
Fruit	Jackfruit ^[15]
Mammal	Indian elephant ^[13]
Tree	Coconut Tree ^[13]
State highway mark	

and Kochi acted as major gateways to the western coast of medieval South India for several foreign entities. These entities included the Chinese, the Arabs, the Persians, various groups from Eastern Africa, various kingdoms from Southeast Asia including the Malacca Sultanate,^[37] and later on, the Europeans.^[38]

In the 14th century, the Kerala school of astronomy and mathematics was founded by Madhava of Sangamagrama in Thrissur. Some of the contributions of the school included the discovery of the infinite series and taylor series of some trigonometry functions.^[39]

In 1498, with the help of Gujarati merchants, Portuguese traveler Vasco Da Gama established a sea route to Kozhikode by sailing around the Cape of Good Hope, located in the southernmost region of Africa. His navy raised Portuguese forts and even minor settlements, which marked the beginning of European influences in India. European trading interests of the Dutch, French and the British took center stage in Kerala.

In 1741, the Dutch were defeated by Travancore king Marthanda Varma. After this humiliating defeat, Dutch military commanders were taken hostage by Marthanda Varma, and they were forced to train the Travancore military with modern European weaponry. This resulted in Travancore being able to defend itself from further European aggression. By the late 18th century, most of the influence in Kerala came from the British. The British crown gained control over Northern Kerala through the creation of the Malabar District. The British also allied with the princely states of Travancore and Cochin in the southern part of the state.

When India declared independence in 1947, Travancore originally sought to establish itself as a fully sovereign nation. However, an agreement was made by the then King of Travancore Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma to have Travancore join India, albeit after many rounds of negotiation. The Malabar District and the Kingdom of Cochin were peacefully annexed into India without much hassle. The state of Kerala was created in 1956 from the former state of Travancore-Cochin, the Malabar district and the Kasaragod taluk of South Canara District of Madras state.^[40]

Geography

The state is wedged between the Lakshadweep Sea and the Western Ghats. Lying between northern latitudes 8°18' and 12°48' and eastern longitudes 74°52' and 77°22',^[41] Kerala experiences humid tropical rainforest climate with some cyclones. The state has a coast of 590 km (370 mi)^[42] and the width of the state varies between 11 and 121 kilometres (7 and 75 mi).^[43] Geographically, Kerala can be divided into three climatically distinct regions: the eastern highlands; rugged and cool mountainous terrain, the central midlands; rolling hills, and the western lowlands; coastal plains.^{[44]:110} Pre-Cambrian and Pleistocene geological formations compose the bulk of Kerala's terrain.^{[45][46]} A catastrophic flood in Kerala in 1341 CE drastically modified its terrain and consequently affected its history; it also created a natural harbour for spice transport.^[47] The eastern region of Kerala consists of high mountains, gorges and deep-cut valleys immediately west of the Western Ghats' rain shadow.^{[44]:110} 41 of Kerala's west-flowing rivers,^[48] and 3 of its east-flowing ones originate in this region.^{[49][50]} The Western Ghats form a wall of mountains interrupted only near Palakkad; hence also known Palghat, where the Palakkad Gap breaks.^[51] The Western Ghats rise on average to 1,500 metres (4,900 feet) above sea level,^[52] while the highest peaks reach around 2,500 metres (8,200 feet).^[53] Anamudi in the Idukki district is the highest peak in south India, is at an elevation of



State highway of Kerala
SH KL1 – SH KL79

[List of Indian state symbols](#)

2,695 m (8,842 ft).^[54] The Western Ghats mountain chain is recognised as one of the world's eight "hottest hotspots" of biological diversity and is listed among UNESCO World Heritage Sites.^[55] The chain's forests are considered to be older than the Himalaya mountains.^[55] The Athirappilly Falls, which is situated on the background of Western Ghat mountain ranges, is also known as *The Niagara of India*.^[56] It is located in the Chalakudy River and is the largest waterfall in the state.^[56] Wayanad is the sole Plateau in Kerala.^[57] The eastern regions in the districts of Wayanad, Malappuram (Chaliyar valley at Nilambur), and Palakkad (Attappadi Valley), which together form parts of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and a continuation of the Mysore Plateau, are known for natural Gold fields, along with the adjoining districts of Karnataka.^[58] Minerals including Ilmenite, Monazite, Thorium, and Titanium, are found in the coastal belt of Kerala.^[59] Kerala's coastal belt of Karunagappally is known for high background radiation from thorium-containing monazite sand. In some coastal panchayats, median outdoor radiation levels are more than 4 mGy/yr and, in certain locations on the coast, it is as high as 70 mGy/yr.^[60]



Anamudi, the highest peak in South India.



Tea and Coffee are produced in the hilly terrains of Wayanad.



Vembanad, a portion of Kerala backwaters, is the longest lake in India.



Ponnani Lighthouse beach

Kerala's western coastal belt is relatively flat compared to the eastern region,^{[44]:33} and is criss-crossed by a network of interconnected brackish canals, lakes, estuaries,^[61] and rivers known as the Kerala Backwaters.^[62] Kuttanad, also known as *The Rice Bowl of Kerala*, has the lowest altitude in India, and is also one of the few places in world where cultivation takes place below sea level.^{[63][64]} The country's longest lake Vembanad, dominates the backwaters; it lies between Alappuzha and Kochi and is about 200 km² (77 sq mi) in area.^[65] Around eight percent of India's waterways are found in Kerala.^[66] Kerala's 44 rivers include the Periyar; 244 kilometres (152 mi), Bharathapuzha; 209 kilometres (130 mi), Pamba; 176 kilometres (109 mi), Chaliyar; 169 kilometres (105 mi), Kadalundipuzha; 130 kilometres (81 mi), Chalakudipuzha; 130 kilometres (81 mi), Valapattanam; 129 kilometres (80 mi) and the Achankovil River; 128 kilometres (80 mi). The average length of the rivers is 64 kilometres (40 mi). Many of the rivers are small and entirely fed by monsoon rain.^[67] As Kerala's rivers are small and lacking in delta, they are more prone to environmental effects. The rivers face problems such as sand mining and pollution.^[68] The state experiences several natural hazards like landslides, floods and droughts. The state was also affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami,^[69] and in 2018 received the worst flooding in nearly a century.^[70] In 2024, Kerala experienced its worst landslides in history.^[71]

Climate

With around 120–140 rainy days per year,^{[72]:80} Kerala has a wet and maritime tropical climate influenced by the seasonal heavy rains of the southwest summer monsoon and northeast winter monsoon.^[73] Around 65% of the rainfall occurs from June to August corresponding to the Southwest monsoon, and the rest from September to December corresponding to Northeast monsoon.^[73] The moisture-laden winds of the Southwest monsoon, on reaching the southernmost point of the Indian Peninsula, because of its topography,

divides into two branches; the "Arabian Sea Branch" and the "Bay of Bengal Branch".^[74] The "Arabian Sea Branch" of the Southwest monsoon first hits the Western Ghats,^[75] making Kerala the first state in India to receive rain from the Southwest monsoon.^{[76][77]} The distribution of pressure patterns is reversed in the Northeast monsoon, during this season the cold winds from North India pick up moisture from the Bay of Bengal and precipitate it on the east coast of peninsular India.^{[78][79]} In Kerala, the influence of the Northeast monsoon is seen in southern districts only.^[80] Kerala's rainfall averages 2,923 mm (115 in) annually.^[81] Some of Kerala's drier lowland regions average only 1,250 mm (49 in); the mountains of the eastern Idukki district receive more than 5,000 mm (197 in) of orographic precipitation: the highest in the state. In eastern Kerala, a drier tropical wet and dry climate prevails. During the summer, the state is prone to gale-force winds, storm surges, cyclone-related torrential downpours, occasional droughts, and rises in sea level.^{[82]:26,46,52} The mean daily temperature ranges from 19.8 °C to 36.7 °C.^[83] Mean annual temperatures range from 25.0 to 27.5 °C in the coastal lowlands to 20.0–22.5 °C in the eastern highlands.^{[82]:65}

Flora and fauna

Most of the biodiversity is concentrated and protected in the Western Ghats. Three-quarters of the land area of Kerala was under thick forest up to the 18th century.^[84] As of 2004, over 25% of India's 15,000 plant species are in Kerala. Out of the 4,000 flowering plant species; 1,272 of which are endemic to Kerala, 900 are medicinal, and 159 are threatened.^{[85]:11} Its 9,400 km² of forests include tropical wet evergreen and semi-evergreen forests (lower and middle elevations—3,470 km²), tropical moist and dry deciduous forests (mid-elevations—4,100 km² and 100 km², respectively), and montane subtropical and temperate (*shola*) forests (highest elevations—100 km²). Altogether, 24% of Kerala is forested.^{[85]:12} Four of the world's Ramsar Convention listed wetlands—Lake Sasthamkotta, Ashtamudi Lake, Thrissur-Ponnani Kole Wetlands, and the Vembanad-Kol wetlands—are in Kerala,^[86] as well as 1455.4 km² of the vast Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and 1828 km² of the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve.^[87] Subjected to extensive clearing for cultivation in the 20th century,^{[88]:6–7} much of the remaining forest cover is now protected from clearfelling.^[89] Eastern Kerala's windward mountains shelter tropical moist forests and tropical dry forests, which are common in the Western Ghats.^{[90][91]} The world's oldest teak plantation 'Conolly's Plot' is in Nilambur.^[92]

Kerala's fauna are notable for their diversity and high rates of endemism: it includes 118 species of mammals (1 endemic), 500 species of birds, 189 species of freshwater fish, 173 species of reptiles (10 of them endemic), and 151 species of amphibians (36 endemic).^[93] These are threatened by extensive habitat destruction, including soil erosion, landslides, salinisation, and resource extraction. In the forests, *sonokeling*, *Dalbergia latifolia*, *anjili*, *mullumurikku*, *Erythrina*, and *Cassia* number among the more than 1,000 species of trees in Kerala. Other plants include bamboo, wild black pepper, wild cardamom, the calamus rattan palm, and aromatic vetiver grass, *Vetiveria zizanioides*.^{[85]:12} Indian elephant, Bengal tiger, Indian leopard, Nilgiri tahr, common palm civet, and grizzled giant squirrels are also found in the forests.^{[85]:12,174–75} Reptiles include the king cobra, viper, python, and mugger crocodile. Kerala's birds include the Malabar trogon, the great hornbill, Kerala laughingthrush, darter and southern hill myna. In the lakes, wetlands, and waterways, fish such as Kadu, Red



A migratory *Ichthyaetus* in Kadalundi Bird Sanctuary



Silent Valley National Park



The Cardamom Hills are notable for biodiversity

Line Torpedo Barb and *choottachi; orange chromide*—*Etroplus maculatus* are found.^{[94][85]:163–65} Recently, a newly described tardigrade (water bears) species collected from Vadakara coast of Kerala named after Kerala State; *Stygarctus keralensis*.^[95]

Divisions, districts and cities

The state's 14 districts are distributed among six regions: North Malabar (far-north Kerala), South Malabar (north-central Kerala), Kochi (central Kerala), Northern Travancore (south-central Kerala), Central Travancore (southern Kerala) and Southern Travancore (far-south Kerala). The districts that serve as administrative regions for taxation purposes are further subdivided into 27 revenue subdivisions and 77 taluks, which have fiscal and administrative powers over settlements within their borders, including maintenance of local land records. Kerala's taluks are further subdivided into 1,674 revenue villages.^{[96][97]}

Since the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India, the local government institutions function as the third tier of government, which constitutes 14 District Panchayats, 152 Block panchayats, 941 Grama Panchayats, 87 Municipalities, six Municipal Corporations and one Township.^[98] Mahé, a part of the Indian union territory of Puducherry,^[99] though 647 kilometres (402 mi) away from it,^[100] is a coastal enclave surrounded by Kerala on all of its landward approaches. The Kannur District surrounds Mahé on three sides with the Kozhikode District on the fourth.^[101]

In 1664, the municipality of Fort Kochi was established by Dutch Malabar, making it the first municipality in the Indian subcontinent, which was dissolved when the Dutch authority got weaker in the 18th century.^[102] The municipalities of Kozhikode, Palakkad, Fort Kochi, Kannur, and Thalassery, were founded on 1 November 1866^{[103][104][105][54]} of the British Indian Empire, making them the first modern municipalities in the state of Kerala. The Municipality of Thiruvananthapuram came into existence in 1920. After two decades, during the reign of Sree Chithira Thirunal, Thiruvananthapuram Municipality was converted into Corporation on 30 October 1940, making it the oldest Municipal Corporation of Kerala.^[106] The first Municipal Corporation founded after the independence of India as well as the second-oldest Municipal Corporation of the state is at Kozhikode in the year 1962.^[107] There are six Municipal corporations in Kerala that govern Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode, Kochi, Kollam, Thrissur, and Kannur.^[108] The Thiruvananthapuram Municipal Corporation is the largest corporation in Kerala while Kochi metropolitan area named Kochi UA is the largest urban agglomeration.^[109] According to a survey by economics research firm Indicus Analytics in 2007, Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode, Kochi, Kollam, Thrissur are among the "best cities in India to live"; the survey used parameters such as health, education, environment, safety, public facilities and entertainment to rank the cities.^[110]

Government and administration

The state is governed by a parliamentary system of representative democracy. Kerala has a unicameral legislature. The Kerala Legislative Assembly also known as Niyamasabha, consists of 140 members who are elected for five-year terms.^[111] The state elects 20 members to the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian Parliament, and 9 members to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house.^[112]

The Government of Kerala is a democratically elected body in India with the governor as its constitutional head and is appointed by the president of India for a five-year term.^[113] The leader of the party or coalition with a majority in the Legislative Assembly is appointed as the chief minister by the governor, and the council of ministers is appointed by the governor on the advice of the chief minister.^[113] The governor

remains a ceremonial head of the state, while the chief minister and his council are responsible for day-to-day government functions. The council of ministers consists of Cabinet Ministers and Ministers of State (MoS). The Secretariat headed by the Chief Secretary assists the council of ministers. The Chief Secretary is also the administrative head of the government. Each government department is headed by a minister, who is assisted by an Additional Chief Secretary or a Principal Secretary, who is usually an officer of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). The Additional Chief Secretaries/Principal Secretaries serve as the administrative heads of the department to which they are assigned. Each department also has officers of the rank of Secretary, Special Secretary, Joint Secretary, etc. assisting the Minister and the Additional Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary.

Each district has a district administrator appointed by the government called a district collector for executive administration. Auxiliary authorities known as panchayats, for which local body elections are regularly held, govern local affairs.^[114] The judiciary consists of the Kerala High Court and a system of lower courts.^[115] The High Court, located in Kochi,^[116] has a Chief Justice along with 35 permanent and twelve additional *pro tempore* justices as of 2021.^[117] The high court also hears cases from the Union Territory of Lakshadweep.^{[118][119]}

In Kerala, local government bodies such as Panchayats, Municipalities, and Corporations have existed since 1959. However, a significant decentralization initiative began in 1993, aligning with constitutional amendments by the central government.^[120] The Kerala Panchayati Raj Act and Kerala Municipality Act were enacted in 1994, establishing a 3-tier system for local governance.^{[121]:12} This system includes Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat, and District Panchayat.^[122] The Acts define clear powers for these institutions.^[120] For urban areas, the Kerala Municipality Act follows a single-tier system, equivalent to Gram Panchayat. These bodies receive substantial administrative, legal, and financial powers to ensure effective decentralization.^{[121]:13} Currently, the state government allocates around 40% of the state plan outlay to local governments.^[123] Kerala was declared the first digital state of India in 2016 and, according to the India Corruption Survey 2019 by Transparency International, is considered the least corrupt state in India.^{[124][125]} The Public Affairs Index-2020 designated Kerala as the best-governed state in India.^[126]

Kerala hosts two major political alliances: the United Democratic Front (UDF), led by the Indian National Congress; and the Left Democratic Front (LDF), led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)). As of 2021 Kerala Legislative Assembly election, the LDF is the ruling coalition; Pinarayi Vijayan of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is the Chief Minister, while V. D. Satheesan of the Indian National Congress is the Leader of the Opposition. According to the Constitution of India, Kerala has a parliamentary system of representative democracy; universal suffrage is granted to residents.^[127]



The Kerala High Court complex in Kochi



The Kerala Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram – the seat of executive administration of Kerala, and formerly of the legislative assembly



The Kerala Legislative Assembly Building in Thiruvananthapuram

Economy

After independence, the state was managed as a social democratic welfare economy.^[128] The "Kerala phenomenon" or "Kerala model of development" of very high human development and in comparison low economic development has resulted from a strong service sector.^{[82]:48[129]:1} In 2019–20, the tertiary sector contributed around 63% of the state's GSPA, compared to 28% by secondary sector, and 8% by primary sector.^[26] In the period between 1960 and 2020, Kerala's economy was gradually shifting from an agrarian economy into a service-based one.^[26]

The state's service sector which accounts for around 63% of its revenue is mainly based upon hospitality industry, tourism, Ayurveda and medical services, pilgrimage, information technology, transportation, financial sector, and education.^[130] Major initiatives under the industrial sector include Cochin Shipyard, shipbuilding, oil refinery, software industry, coastal mineral industries,^[59] food processing, marine products processing, and Rubber based products. The primary sector of the state is mainly based upon cash crops.^[131] Kerala produces a significant amount of the national output of cash crops such as coconut, tea, coffee, pepper, natural rubber, cardamom, and cashew in India.^[131] The cultivation of food crops began to reduce since the 1950s.^[131]

Kerala's economy depends significantly on emigrants working in foreign countries, mainly in the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, and the remittances annually contribute more than a fifth of GSDP.^[132] The state witnessed significant emigration during the Gulf Boom of the 1970s and early 1980s. In 2012, Kerala still received the highest remittances of all states: US\$11.3 billion, which was nearly 16% of the US\$71 billion remittances to the country.^[133] In 2015, NRI deposits in Kerala have soared to over ₹1 lakh crore (US\$12 billion), amounting to one-sixth of all the money deposited in NRI accounts, which comes to about ₹7 lakh crore (US\$83 billion).^[134] Malappuram district has the highest proportion of emigrant households in state.^[26] A study commissioned by the Kerala State Planning Board, suggested that the state look for other reliable sources of income, instead of relying on remittances to finance its expenditure.^[135]

As of March 2002, Kerala's banking sector comprised 3341 local branches: each branch served 10,000 people, lower than the national average of 16,000; the state has the third-highest bank penetration among Indian states.^[136] On 1 October 2011, Kerala became the first state in the country to have at least one banking facility in every village.^[137] Unemployment in 2007 was estimated at 9.4%;^[138] chronic issues are underemployment, low employability of youth, and a low female labour participation rate of only 13.5%,^{[139]:5,13} as was the practice of Nokku kooli, "wages for looking on".^[140] By 1999–2000, the rural and urban poverty rates dropped to 10.0% and 9.6%, respectively.^[141]

The state's budget of 2020–2021 was ₹1.15 lakh crore (US\$14 billion).^[142] The state government's tax revenues (excluding the shares from Union tax pool) amounted to ₹674 billion (US\$8.0 billion) in 2020–21; up from ₹557 billion (US\$6.6 billion) in 2019–20. Its non-tax revenues (excluding the shares from Union



Technopark at Thiruvananthapuram, the first and largest information technology (IT) park in India



Vallarpadam Terminal at Kochi, the first transshipment terminal in India



Mappila Bay harbour at Kannur

tax pool) of the Government of Kerala reached ₹146 billion (US\$1.7 billion) in 2020–2021.^[142] However, Kerala's high ratio of taxation to GSDP has not alleviated chronic budget deficits and unsustainable levels of government debt, which have impacted social services.^[143] A record total of 223 hartals were observed in 2006, resulting in a revenue loss of over ₹20 billion (US\$240 million).^[144] Kerala's 10% rise in GDP is 3% more than the national GDP. In 2013, capital expenditure rose 30% compared to the national average of 5%, owners of two-wheelers rose by 35% compared to the national rate of 15%, and the teacher-pupil ratio rose 50% from 2:100 to 4:100.^[145]

The Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board is a government-owned financial institution in the state to mobilise funds for infrastructure development from outside the state revenue, aiming at overall infrastructure development of the state.^{[146][147]} In November 2015, the Ministry of Urban Development selected seven cities of Kerala for a comprehensive development program known as the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT).^[148] A package of ₹2.5 million (US\$30,000) was declared for each of the cities to develop service level improvement plan (SLIP), a plan for better functioning of the local urban bodies in the cities of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Kochi, Thrissur, Kozhikode, and Palakkad.^[149] The Grand Kerala Shopping Festival (GKSF) was started in 2007, covering more than 3000 outlets across the nine cities of Kerala with huge tax discounts, VAT refunds and huge array of prizes.^[150] Lulu International Mall at Thiruvananthapuram is the largest shopping mall in India.^[151]

Despite many achievements, Kerala faces many challenges like high levels of unemployment that disproportionately impact educated women, a high degree of global exposure and a very fragile environment.^[152]

Industries

Traditional industries manufacturing items; coir, handlooms, and handicrafts employ around one million people.^[153] Kerala supplies 60% of the total global produce of white coir fibre. India's first coir factory was set up in Alleppey in 1859–60.^[154] The Central Coir Research Institute was established there in 1959. As per the 2006–2007 census by SIDBI, there are 1,468,104 micro, small and medium enterprises in Kerala employing 3,031,272 people.^{[155][156]} The KSIDC has promoted more than 650 medium and large manufacturing firms in Kerala, creating employment for 72,500 people.^[157] A mining sector of 0.3% of GSDP involves extraction of ilmenite, kaolin, bauxite, silica, quartz, rutile, zircon, and sillimanite.^[158] Other major sectors are tourism, medical sector, educational sector, banking, ship building, oil refinery, infrastructure, manufacturing, home gardens, animal husbandry and business process outsourcing.

Agriculture

The major change in agriculture in Kerala occurred in the 1970s when production of rice fell due to increased availability of rice all over India and decreased availability of labour.^[159] Consequently, investment in rice production decreased and a major portion of the land shifted to the cultivation of perennial tree crops and seasonal crops.^{[160][161]} Profitability of crops fell due to a shortage of farm labour, the high price of land, and the uneconomic size of operational holdings.^[162] Only 27.3% of the families in Kerala depend upon agriculture for their livelihood, which is also the least corresponding rate in India.^[163]



A paddy field at Palakkad, also known as The Granary of Kerala

Kerala produces 97% of the national output of black pepper^[164] and accounts for 85% of the natural rubber in the country.^{[165][166]} Coconut, tea, coffee, cashew, and spices—including cardamom, vanilla, cinnamon, and nutmeg are the main agricultural products.^{[44]: 74[167][168][169][170][171]} Around 80% of India's export quality cashew kernels are prepared in Kollam.^[172] The key cash crop is coconut and Kerala ranks first in the area of coconut cultivation in India.^[173] Around 90% of the total Cardamom produced in India is from Kerala.^[26] India is the second-largest producer of Cardamom in world.^[26] About 20% of the total Coffee produced in India are from Kerala.^[131] The key agricultural staple is rice, with varieties grown in extensive paddy fields.^[174] Home gardens made up a significant portion of the agricultural sector.^[175]

Fisheries

With 590 kilometres (370 miles) of coastal belt,^[176] 400,000 hectares of inland water resources^[177] and approximately 220,000 active fishermen,^[178] Kerala is one of the leading producers of fish in India.^[179] According to 2003–04 reports, about 11 lakh(1.1 million) people earn their livelihood from fishing and allied activities such as drying, processing, packaging, exporting and transporting fisheries. The annual yield of the sector was estimated as 6,08,000 tons in 2003–04.^[180] This contributes to about 3% of the total economy of the state. In 2006, around 22% of the total Indian marine fishery yield was from Kerala.^[181] During the southwest monsoon, a suspended mud bank develops along the shore, which in turn leads to calm ocean water, peaking the output of the fishing industry. This phenomenon is locally called *chakara*.^{[182][183]} The waters provide a large variety of fish: pelagic species; 59%, demersal species; 23%, crustaceans, molluscs and others for 18%.^[181] Around 1050,000(1.050 million) fishermen haul an annual catch of 668,000 tonnes as of a 1999–2000 estimate; 222 fishing villages are strung along the 590-kilometre (370-mile) coast. Another 113 fishing villages dot the hinterland.

Transportation

Roads

Kerala has 331,904 kilometres (206,236 mi) of roads, which accounts for 5.6% of India's total.^{[26][184]} This translates to about 9.94 kilometres (6.18 mi) of road per thousand people, compared to an average of 4.87 kilometres (3.03 mi) in the country.^{[26][184]} Roads in Kerala include 1,812 kilometres (1,126 mi) of national highway; 1.6% of the nation's total, 4,342 kilometres (2,698 mi) of state highway; 2.5% of the nation's total, 27,470 kilometres (17,070 mi) of district roads; 4.7% of the nation's total, 33,201 kilometres (20,630 mi) of urban (municipal) roads; 6.3% of the nation's total, and 158,775 kilometres (98,658 mi) of rural roads; 3.8% of the nation's total.^[185] Kottayam has the maximum length of roads among the districts of Kerala, while Wayanad accounts for minimum.^[186] Most of Kerala's west coast is accessible through the NH 66 (previously NH 17 and 47); and the eastern side is accessible through state highways.^[187] New projects for hill and coastal highways were recently announced under KIIFB.^[188] National Highway 66, with the longest stretch of road (1,622 kilometres (1,008 mi)) connects Kanyakumari to Mumbai; it enters Kerala via Talapady in Kasargod and passes through Kannur, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Guruvayur, Kochi, Alappuzha, Kollam, Thiruvananthapuram before entering Tamil Nadu.^[187] Palakkad district is generally referred to as the Gateway of Kerala, due to the presence of the Palakkad Gap in the Western Ghats, through which the northern (Malabar) and southern (Travancore) parts of Kerala are connected to the rest of India via road and



NH 544 Six lane Thrissur – Vadakkencherry

rail. The state's largest checkpoint, Walayar, is on NH 544, in the border town between Kerala and Tamil Nadu, through which a large amount of public and commercial transportation reaches the northern and central districts of Kerala.^[189]

The Department of Public Works is responsible for maintaining and expanding the state highways system and major district roads.^[190] The Kerala State Transport Project (KSTP), which includes the GIS-based Road Information and Management Project (RIMS), is responsible for maintaining and expanding the state highways in Kerala. It also oversees a few major district roads.^{[191][192]} Traffic in Kerala has been growing at a rate of 10–11% every year, resulting in high traffic and pressure on the roads. Traffic density is nearly four times the national average, reflecting the state's high population. Kerala's annual total of road accidents is among the nation's highest. The accidents are mainly the result of the narrow roads and irresponsible driving.^[193] National Highways in Kerala are among the narrowest in the country and will remain so for the foreseeable future, as the state government has received an exemption that allows narrow national highways. In Kerala, highways are 45 metres (148 feet) wide. In other states, national highways are grade separated, 60 metres (200 feet) wide with a minimum of four lanes, as well as 6 or 8-lane access-controlled expressways.^{[194][195]} The National Highways Authority of India (NHA) has threatened the Kerala state government that it will give higher priority to other states in highway development since political commitment to better highways in Kerala has been lacking.^[196] As of 2013, Kerala had the highest road accident rate in the country, with most fatal accidents taking place along the state's national highways.^[197]

Railways

Southern Railway zone of Indian Railways operates all railway lines in the state connecting most major towns and cities except those in the highland districts of Idukki and Wayanad.^[198] The railway network in the state is controlled by two out of six divisions of the Southern Railway; Thiruvananthapuram Railway division headquartered at Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad Railway Division headquartered at Palakkad.^[199] Thiruvananthapuram Central (TVC) is the busiest railway station in the state.^[200] Kerala's major railway stations are:

- Thiruvananthapuram Central (TVC)
- Ernakulam Junction (South) (ERS)
- Kozhikode (CLT)
- Kollam Junction (QLN)
- Thrissur (TCR)
- Palakkad Junction (PGT)
- Kannur (CAN)
- Shoranur Junction (SRR)
- Ernakulam Town (North) (ERN)
- Kottayam (KTYM)
- Chengannur (CNGR)
- Alappuzha (ALLP)
- Kochuveli (KCVL)
- Kayamkulam Junction (KYJ)
- Tirur (TIR)
- Kasaragod (KGQ)
- Aluva (AWY)
- Thalassery (TLY)

Airports

Kerala has four international airports:

- Thiruvananthapuram International Airport
- Cochin International Airport
- Calicut International Airport
- Kannur International Airport

Kollam Airport, established under the Madras Presidency, but since closed, was the first airport in Kerala.^[201] Kannur had an airstrip used for commercial aviation as early as 1935 when Tata airlines operated weekly flights between Mumbai and Thiruvananthapuram – stopping at Goa and Kannur.^[202] Trivandrum International Airport, managed by the Airport Authority of India, is among the oldest existing airports in South India. Calicut International Airport, which was opened in 1988, is the second-oldest existing airport in Kerala and the oldest in the Malabar region.^[203] Cochin International Airport is the busiest in the state and the seventh busiest in the country. It is also the first airport in the world to be fully powered by solar energy^[204] and has won the coveted Champion of the Earth award, the highest environmental honour instituted by the United Nations.^[205] Cochin International Airport is also the first Indian airport to be incorporated as a public limited company; it was funded by nearly 10,000 non-resident Indians from 30 countries.^[206] Other than civilian airports, Kochi has a naval airport named INS Garuda. Thiruvananthapuram International Airport shares civilian facilities with the Southern Air Command of the Indian Air Force. These facilities are used mostly by central government VIPs visiting Kerala.



Cochin International Airport, the busiest airport in the state is also the first airport in the world to be fully powered by solar energy

Water transport

Kerala has two major ports, four intermediate ports, and 13 minor ports, 4 of which have immigration checkpoint facilities.^{[207][208]} The major port in the state is at Kochi, which has an area of 8.27 km².^[209] The Vizhinjam International Seaport Thiruvananthapuram, which is currently classified as a major port, only completed Phase I as others are under construction.^[209] Other intermediate ports include Beypore, Kollam, and Azheekal.^[209] The remaining ports are classified as minor which include Manjeshwaram, Kasaragod, Nileshwaram, Kannur, Thalassery, Vadakara, Ponnani, Munambam, Manakodam, Alappuzha, Kayamkulam, Neendakara, and Valiyathura.^[209] The Kerala Maritime Institute is headquartered at Neendakara, which has an additional subcentre at Kodungallur too.^[209] The state has numerous backwaters, which are used for commercial inland navigation. Transport services are mainly provided by country craft and passenger vessels. There are 67 navigable rivers in the state while the total length of inland waterways is 1,687 kilometres (1,048 mi).^[210] The main constraints to the expansion of inland navigation are; lack of depth in waterways caused by silting, lack of maintenance of navigation systems and bank protection, accelerated growth of the water hyacinth, lack of modern inland craft terminals, and lack of a cargo handling system.



Cranes at the Cochin Shipyard

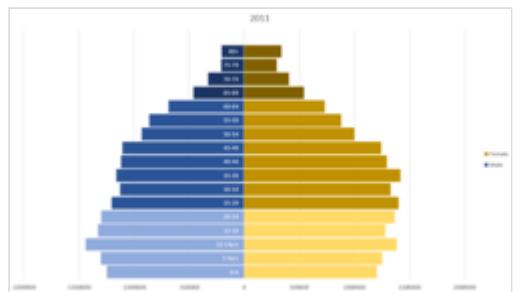
Kerala also have India's first water metro , called 'Kochi water metro'.^[211] The Kochi water metro project identified 15 routes, connecting 10 islands along a network of routes that span 78 km with a fleet of 78 fast, and fully electrically propelled hybrid ferries .^[212]

The 616 kilometres (383 mi) long West-Coast Canal is the longest waterway in state connecting Kasaragod to Poovar.^[213] It is divided into five sections: 41 kilometres (25 mi) long Kasaragod-Nileshwaram reach, 188 kilometres (117 mi) long Nileshwaram-Kozhikode reach, 160 kilometres (99 mi) Kozhikode-Kottapuram reach, 168 kilometres (104 mi) long National Waterway 3 (Kottapuram-Kollam reach), and 74 kilometres (46 mi) long Kollam-Vizhinjam reach.^[26] The Conolly Canal, which is a part of the West-Coast

Canal, connects the city of Kozhikode with Kochi through Ponnani, passing through the districts of Malappuram and Thrissur. It begins at Vadakara.^[214] It was constructed in the year 1848 under the orders of then District collector of Malabar, H. V. Conolly, initially to facilitate movement of goods to Kallayi Port from the hinterlands of Malabar through Kuttiady and Korapuzha river systems.^[214] It was the main waterway for the cargo movement between Kozhikode and Kochi through Ponnani, for more than a century.^[214] Other important waterways in Kerala include the Alappuzha-Changanassery Canal, Alappuzha-Kottayam-Athirampuzha Canal, and Kottayam-Vaikom Canal.^[209]

Demographics

Kerala is home to 2.8% of India's population; with a density of 859 persons per km², its land is nearly three times as densely settled as the national average of 370 persons per km².^[215] As of 2011, Thiruvananthapuram is the most populous city in Kerala.^[216] In the state, the rate of population growth is India's lowest, and the decadal growth of 4.9% in 2011 is less than one-third of the all-India average of 17.6%.^[215] Kerala's population more than doubled between 1951 and 1991 by adding 15.6 million people to reach 29.1 million residents in 1991; the population stood at 33.3 million by 2011.^[215] Kerala's coastal regions are the most densely settled with population of 2022 persons per km², 2.5 times the overall population density of the state, 859 persons per km², leaving the eastern hills and mountains comparatively sparsely populated.^[217] Kerala is the second-most urbanised major state in the country with 47.7% urban population according to the 2011 Census of India.^[23] Around 31.8 million Keralites are predominantly Malayali.^[215] The state's 321,000 indigenous tribal Adivasis, 1.1% of the population, are concentrated in the east.^{[218]: 10–12}



The Population pyramid of Kerala

Gender

There is a tradition of matrilineal inheritance in Kerala, where the mother is the head of the household.^[219] As a result, women in Kerala have had a much higher standing and influence in the society. This was common among certain influential castes and is a factor in the value placed on daughters. Christian missionaries also influenced Malayali women in that they started schools for girls from poor families.^[220] Opportunities for women such as education and gainful employment often translate into a lower birth rate,^[221] which in turn, make education and employment more likely to be accessible and more beneficial for women. This creates an upward spiral for both the women and children of the community that is passed on to future generations. According to the Human Development Report of 1996, Kerala's Gender Development Index was 597; higher than any other state of India. Factors, such as high rates of female literacy, education, work participation and life expectancy, along with favourable sex ratio, contributed to it.^[222]

Kerala's sex ratio of 1.084 (females to males) is higher than that of the rest of India; it is the only state where women outnumber men.^{[129]: 2} While having the opportunities that education affords them, such as political participation, keeping up to date with current events, reading religious texts, etc., these tools have still not translated into full, equal rights for the women of Kerala. There is a general attitude that women must be restricted for their own benefit. In the state, despite the social progress, gender still influences social mobility.^{[223][224][225]}

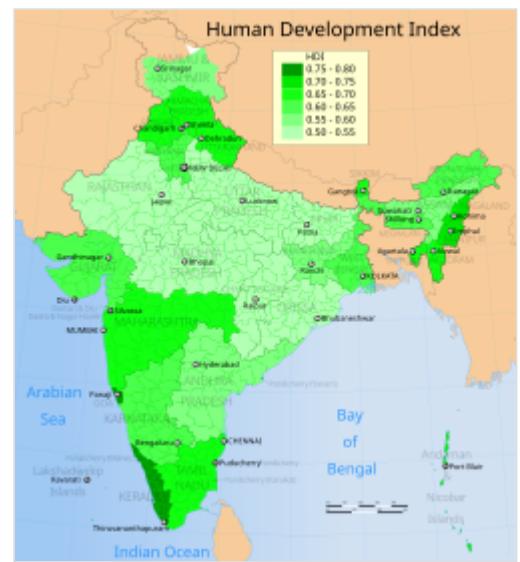
LGBT rights

Kerala has been at the forefront of LGBT issues in India.^[226] Kerala is one of the first states in India to form a welfare policy for the transgender community. In 2016, the Kerala government introduced free sex reassignment surgery through government hospitals.^{[227][228][229]} Queerala is one of the major LGBT organisations in Kerala. It campaigns for increased awareness of LGBT people and sensitisation concerning healthcare services, workplace policies and educational curriculum.^[230] Since 2010, Kerala Queer Pride has been held annually across various cities in Kerala.^[231]

In June 2019, the Kerala government passed a new order that members of the transgender community should not be referred to as the "third gender" or "other gender" in government communications. Instead, the term "transgender" should be used. Previously, the gender preferences provided in government forms and documents included male, female, and other/third gender.^{[232][233]}

Human Development Index

Under a democratic communist local government, Kerala has achieved a record of social development much more advanced than the Indian average.^[235] As of 2015, Kerala has a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.770, which is in the "high" category, ranking it first in the country.^[10] It was 0.790 in 2007–08^[236] and it had a consumption-based HDI of 0.920, which is better than that of many developed countries.^[236] Comparatively higher spending by the government on primary level education, health care and the elimination of poverty from the 19th century onwards has helped the state maintain an exceptionally high HDI;^{[237][238]} the report was prepared by the central government's Institute of Applied Manpower Research.^{[239][240]} However, the Human Development Report 2005, prepared by Centre for Development Studies envisages a virtuous phase of inclusive development for the state since the advancement in human development had already started aiding the economic development of the state.^[237] Kerala is also widely regarded as the cleanest and healthiest state in India.^[241]



Human Development Index map for Indian states in 2006, as calculated by Government of India and United Nations Development Programme.^[234]

According to the 2011 census, Kerala has the highest literacy rate (94%) among Indian states. In 2018, the literacy rate was calculated to be 96%. In the Kottayam district, the literacy rate was 97%.^{[242][12][243]} The life expectancy in Kerala is 74 years, among the highest in India as of 2011.^[244] Kerala's rural poverty rate fell from 59% (1973–1974) to 12% (1999–2010); the overall (urban and rural) rate fell 47% between the 1970s and 2000s against the 29% fall in overall poverty rate in India.^[245] By 1999–2000, the rural and urban poverty rates dropped to 10.0% and 9.6%, respectively.^[141] The 2013 Tendulkar Committee Report on poverty estimated that the percentages of the population living below the poverty line in rural and urban Kerala are 9.1% and 5.0%, respectively.^[246] These changes stem largely from efforts begun in the late 19th century by the kingdoms of Cochin and Travancore to boost social welfare.^{[247][248]} This focus was maintained by Kerala's post-independence government.^{[82][249]:48}

Kerala has undergone a "demographic transition" characteristic of such developed nations as Canada, Japan, and Norway.^{[129]:1} In 2005, 11.2% of people were over the age of 60.^[249] In 2023, the BBC reported on the problems and benefits which have arisen from migration away from Kerala, focussing on the village of Kumbanad.^[250]

In 2004, the birthrate was low at 18 per 1,000.^[251] According to the 2011 census, Kerala had a total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.6. All districts except Malappuram district had fertility rates below 2. Fertility rate is highest in Malappuram district (2.2) and lowest in Pathanamthitta district (1.3).^[252] In 2001, Muslims had the TFR of 2.6 as against 1.5 for Hindus and 1.7 for Christians.^[253] The state also is regarded as the "least corrupt Indian state" according to the surveys conducted by CMS Indian Corruption Study (CMS-ICS)^[254] Transparency International (2005)^[255] and *India Today* (1997).^[256] Kerala has the lowest homicide rate among Indian states, with 1.1 per 100,000 in 2011.^[257] In respect of female empowerment, some negative factors such as higher suicide rate, lower share of earned income, child marriage,^[258] complaints of sexual harassment and limited freedom are reported.^[222] The child marriage is lower in Kerala. The Malappuram district has the highest number of child marriages and the number of such cases is increasing in Malappuram. Child marriages are particularly higher among the Muslim community.^{[259][260]} In 2019, Kerala recorded the highest child sex abuse complaints in India.^[261]

In 2015, Kerala had the highest conviction rate of any state, over 77%.^[262] Kerala has the lowest proportion of homeless people in rural India, <0.1%,^[263] and the state is attempting to reach the goal of becoming the first "Zero Homeless State", in addition to its acclaimed "Zero landless project", with private organisations and the expatriate Malayali community funding projects for building homes for the homeless.^[264] The state was also among the lowest in the India State Hunger Index next only to Punjab. In 2015 Kerala became the first "complete digital state" by implementing e-governance initiatives.^[265]

Healthcare

Kerala is a pioneer in implementing the universal health care program.^[266] The sub-replacement fertility level and infant mortality rate are lower compared to those of other states, estimated from 12^{[82][251]:49} to 14^{[267]:5} deaths per 1,000 live births; as per the National Family Health Survey 2015–16, it has dropped to 6.^[268] According to a study commissioned by Lien Foundation, a Singapore-based philanthropic organisation, Kerala is considered to be the best place to die in India based on the state's provision of palliative care for patients with serious illnesses.^[269] However, Kerala's morbidity rate is higher than that of any other Indian state—118 (rural) and 88 (urban) per 1,000 people. The corresponding figures for all India were 55 and 54 per 1,000, respectively as of 2005.^{[267]:5} Kerala's 13.3% prevalence of low birth weight is higher than that of many first world nations.^[251] Outbreaks of water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea, dysentery, hepatitis, and typhoid among the more than 50% of people who rely on 3 million water wells is an issue worsened by the lack of sewers.^{[270]:5–7} As of 2017, the state has the highest number of diabetes patients and also the highest prevalence rate of the disease in India.^[271]



Regional Cancer Centre,
Trivandrum

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization designated Kerala the world's first "baby-friendly state" because of its effective promotion of breastfeeding over formulas.^{[272][273]} Over 95% of Keralite births are hospital-delivered and the state also has the lowest infant mortality rate in the country. The third National Family Health Survey ranks Kerala first in "Institutional Delivery" with 100% of births being in medical facilities.^[217] Ayurveda,^{[274]:13} siddha, and endangered and endemic modes of traditional medicine, including kalari, marmachikitsa and vishavaidyam, are practised. Some occupational communities such as Kaniyar were known as native medicine men in relation to the practice of such streams of medical systems, apart from their traditional vocation.^[275] These propagate via gurukula discipleship,^{[274]:5–6} and comprise a fusion of both medicinal and alternative treatments.^{[274]:15} The Arya

Vaidya Sala established by Vaidyaratnam P. S. Warrier at Kottakkal (about 10 km from Malappuram) in 1902, is the largest Ayurvedic medicinal network and health centre in the state.^{[276][277][278]} It is also one of the largest Ayurvedic medicinal brands in the world.^{[276][277][278]}

In 2014, Kerala became the first state in India to offer free cancer treatment to the poor, via a program called Sukrutham.^[279] People in Kerala experience elevated incidence of cancers, liver and kidney diseases.^[280] In April 2016, the *Economic Times* reported that 250,000 residents undergo treatment for cancer. It also reported that approximately 150 to 200 liver transplants are conducted in the region's hospitals annually. Approximately 42,000 cancer cases are reported in the region annually. This is believed to be an underestimate as private hospitals may not be reporting their figures. Long waiting lists for kidney donations have stimulated illegal trade in human kidneys, and prompted the establishment of the Kidney Federation of India which aims to support financially disadvantaged patients.^[281] As of 2017–18, there are 6,691 modern medicine institutions under the Department of Health Services, of which the total bed strength is 37,843; 15,780 in rural areas and 22,063 in urban.^[282]

Language

Malayalam is the official language of Kerala and one of the Classical languages of India.^[283] There is a significant Tamil population throughout Kerala mainly in Idukki district and Palakkad district in which it accounts for 17.48% and 4.8% respectively of the two districts' populations.^[284] Tulu and Kannada are spoken mainly in the northern parts of Kasaragod district, each of which account for 8.77% and 4.23% of total population in the district, respectively.^{[284][285]}



Religion

Kerala is very religiously diverse with Hindus, Muslims and Christians having a significant population throughout the state. Kerala is often regarded as one of the most diverse states in all of India.^{[287][288]} Hinduism is the most widely professed faith in Kerala, with significant numbers of adherents to Islam and Christianity. In comparison with the rest of India, Kerala experiences relatively little sectarianism.^[289] According to 2011 Census of India figures, 54.7% of Kerala's residents are Hindus, 26.6% are Muslims, 18.4% are Christians, and the remaining 0.3% follow another religion or have no religious affiliation.^[290] Hindus represent the biggest religious group in all districts except Malappuram, where they are outnumbered by Muslims.^[291] Kerala has the largest population of Christians in India.^[292] As of 2016, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others account for 41.9%, 42.6%, 15.4% and 0.2% of the total childbirths in the state, respectively.^[293]

Islam arrived in Kerala, a part of the larger Indian Ocean rim, via spice and silk traders from the Middle East. Historians do not rule out the possibility of Islam being introduced to Kerala as early as the seventh century CE.^{[294][295]} Notable has been the occurrence of Cheraman Perumal Tajuddin, the mythical Hindu king who moved to Arabia to meet Muhammad and converted to Islam.^{[296][297][298]} Kerala Muslims are generally referred to as the Mappilas. Mappilas are but one among the many communities that form the

Muslim population of Kerala.^{[299][300]} According to the Legend of Cheraman Perumals, the first Indian mosque was built in 624 CE at Kodungallur with the mandate of the last ruler (the Cheraman Perumal) of Cheraman Perumal of Chera dynasty, who converted to Islam during the lifetime of Muhammad (c. 570–632).^{[301][302][303][304]}

Ancient Christian tradition says that Christianity reached the shores of Kerala in 52 CE with the arrival of Thomas the Apostle, one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ.^{[305][306][307][308]} Saint Thomas Christians include Syro-Malabar Catholic,^[309] Syro-Malankara Catholic,^[310] Jacobite Syrian Christian Church,^[311] Mar Thoma Syrian Church,^[312] Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church,^[313] the Syrian Anglicans of the CSI^[314] and Pentecostal Saint Thomas Christians.^[315] The origin of the Latin Catholic Christians in Kerala is the result of the missionary endeavours of the Portuguese Padroado in the 16th century.^{[316][317][318]} As a consequence of centuries of mixing with colonial immigrants, beginning with the Portuguese, Dutch, French, British and other Europeans, there is a community of Anglo-Indians in Kerala of mixed European and Indian parentage or ancestry. Kerala has the highest population of Christians among all the states of India.^[319]

Judaism reached Kerala in the 10th century BCE during the time of King Solomon.^[320] They are called Cochin Jews or Malabar Jews and are the oldest group of Jews in India.^{[321][322]} There was a significant Jewish community which existed in Kerala until the 20th century, when most of them migrated to Israel.^[323] The Paradesi Synagogue at Kochi is the oldest synagogue in the Commonwealth.^[324] Jainism has a considerable following in the Wayanad district.^{[325][326]}

Education

The Kerala school of astronomy and mathematics flourished between the 14th and 16th centuries. In attempting to solve astronomical problems, the Kerala school independently created a number of important mathematics concepts, including series expansion for trigonometric functions.^{[327][328]} In the early decades of the 19th century, the modern educational transformation of Kerala was triggered by the efforts of the Church Mission Society missionaries to promote mass education.^{[329][330][331][332][333]} Following the recommendations of the Wood's despatch of 1854, the princely states of Travancore and Cochin launched mass education drives mainly based on castes and communities, and introduced a system of grant-in-aid to attract more private initiatives.^[334] Catholic institutions such as St Thomas College Thrissur and SB College Changanasserry were established under the leadership of the Catholic Church. The efforts by leaders such as Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, Mar Charles Lavigne SJ, Vaikunda Swami, Narayana Guru and Ayyankali in aiding the socially discriminated castes in the state—



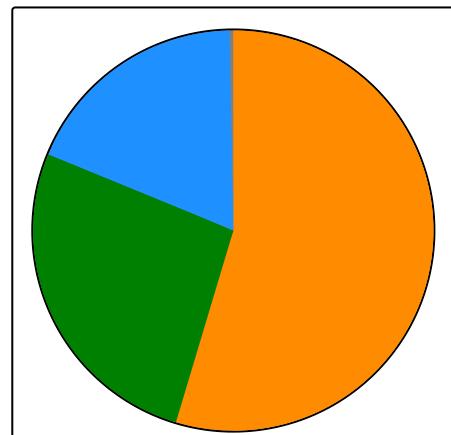
Jain Temple at Sultan Bathery.



Model of original Cheraman Juma Mosque.



St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Church, Palayoor.



Religion in Kerala (2011)^[286]

- Hinduism (54.73%)
- Islam (26.56%)
- Christianity (18.38%)
- Other or none (0.32%)

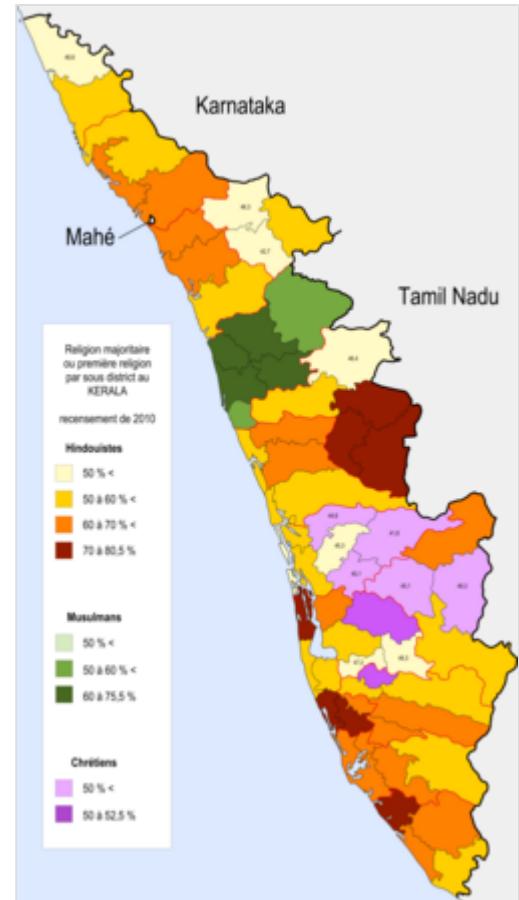
with the help of community-based organisations like Nair Service Society, SNDP, Muslim Educational Society, Muslim Mahajana Sabha, Yoga Kshema Sabha (of Nambudiris) and congregations of Christian churches—led to the further development of mass education in Kerala.^[334]

In 1991, Kerala became the first state in India to be recognised as completely literate, although the effective literacy rate at that time was only 90%.^[335] In 2006–2007, the state topped the Education Development Index (EDI) of the 21 major states in India.^[336] As of 2007, enrolment in elementary education was almost 100%; and, unlike other states in India, educational opportunity was almost equally distributed among sexes, social groups, and regions.^[337] According to the 2011 census, Kerala has a 93.9% literacy, compared to the national literacy rate of 74.0%.^[243] In January 2016, Kerala became the first Indian state to achieve 100% primary education through its *Athulyam* literacy programme.^[338]

The educational system prevailing in the state's schools specifies an initial 10-year course of study, which is divided into three stages: lower primary, upper primary, and secondary school—known as 4+3+3, which signifies the number of years for each stage.^[337] After the first 10 years of schooling, students typically enroll in Higher Secondary Schooling in one of the three major streams—liberal arts, commerce, or science.^[339] The majority of public schools are affiliated with the Kerala Board of Public Examination.^[340] Other educational boards are the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE), the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE), and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).^[339]

Culture

The culture of Kerala is composite and cosmopolitan in nature and it is an integral part of Indian culture.^[341] It is a synthesis of Aryan, Dravidian, Arab, and European cultures,^[342] developed over millennia, under influences from other parts of India and abroad.^[343] It is defined by its antiquity and the organic continuity sustained by the Malayali people.^[344] It was elaborated through centuries of contact with neighbouring and overseas cultures.^[345] However, the geographical insularity of Kerala from the rest of the country has resulted in the development of a distinctive lifestyle, art, architecture, language, literature and social institutions.^[341] Over 10,000 festivals are celebrated in the state every year.^[346] The Malayalam calendar, a solar sidereal calendar started from 825 CE in Kerala,^[347] finds common usage in planning agricultural and religious activities.^[348] Malayalam, one of the classical languages in India, is Kerala's official language.^[349] Over a dozen other scheduled and unscheduled languages are also spoken.^[350] Kerala has the greatest consumption of alcohol in India.^[351]



Percentage of the most popular religion in each Taluk of Kerala



University of Kerala at Thiruvananthapuram

Festivals

Many of the temples in Kerala hold festivals on specific days of the year.^[352] A common characteristic of these festivals is the hoisting of a holy flag which is brought down on the final day of the festival after immersing the deity.^[353] Some festivals include Poorams, the best known of these being the Thrissur Pooram.^[354] "Elephants, firework displays and huge crowds" are the major attractions of Thrissur Pooram.^[355] Other known festivals are Makaravilakku,^[356] Chinakkathoor Pooram, Attukal Pongala and Nenmara Vallangi Vela^[357] Other than these, festivals locally known as utsavams are conducted by many temples mostly on annual basis. Temples that can afford it will usually involve at least one richly caparisoned elephant as part of the festivities. The idol in the temple is taken out on a procession around the countryside atop this elephant. When the procession visits homes around the temple, people will usually present rice, coconuts, and other offerings to it.^[358] Processions often include traditional music such as Panchari melam or Panchavadyam.^[359] Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha are celebrated by the Muslim community of the state while the festivals like Christmas and Easter are observed by the Christians.^[16] Onam is a harvest festival celebrated by the people of Kerala and is reminiscent of the state's agrarian past.^{[360][361]} It is a local festival of Kerala^[362] consisting of a four-day public holidays; from Onam Eve (Uthradam) to the fourth Onam Day.^[363] Onam falls in the Malayalam month of Chingam (August–September)^[364] and marks the commemoration of the homecoming of King Mahabali.^[365] The total duration of Onam is 10 days and it is celebrated all across Kerala. It is one of the festivals celebrated with cultural elements such as Vallam Kali,^[366] Pulikali,^[367] Pookkalam,^[368] Thumbi Thullal^[369] and Onavillu.^[370]



A Kathakali artist



During Onam, Kerala's biggest celebration, Keralites create pookkalam (floral carpet) designs in front of their houses.



Thrissur Pooram festival



A mohiniyattam performance

Music and dance

Kerala is home to a number of performance arts. These include five classical dance forms: Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, Koodiyattom, Thullal and Krishnanattam, which originated and developed in the temple theatres during the classical period under the patronage of royal houses.^[371] Kerala natanam, Thirayattam,^[372] Kaliyattam, Theyyam, Koothu and Padayani are other dance forms associated with the temple culture of the region.^[373] Some traditional dance forms such as Oppana and Duffmuttu were popular among the Muslims of the state,^[374] while Margamkali and Parichamuttukali are popular among the Syrian Christians and Chavittu nadakom is popular among the Latin Christians.^{[375][376]} The development of classical music in Kerala is attributed to the contributions it received from the traditional performance arts associated with the temple culture of Kerala.^[377] The development of the indigenous classical music form, Sopana Sangeetham, illustrates the rich contribution that temple culture has made to the arts of Kerala.^[377] Carnatic music

dominates Keralite traditional music. This was the result of Swathi Thirunal Rama Varma's popularisation of the genre in the 19th century.^[345] Raga-based renditions known as *sopanam* accompany *kathakali* performances.^[378] *Melam*, including the *paandi* and *panchari* variants, is a more percussive style of music,^[379] it is performed at *Kshetram*-centered festivals using the *chenda*. *Panchavadyam* is a form of percussion ensemble, in which artists use five types of percussion instruments.^[379] Kerala's visual arts range from traditional murals to the works of Raja Ravi Varma, the state's most renowned painter.^[377] Most of the castes and communities in Kerala have rich collections of folk songs and ballads associated with a variety of themes; *Vadakkan Pattukal* (Northern Ballads), *Thekkan pattukal* (Southern Ballads), *Vanchi pattukal* (Boat Songs), *Mappila Pattukal* (Muslim songs) and *Pallippattukal* (Church songs) are a few of them.^[380]



Onam Sadya

Cinema

Malayalam films carved a niche for themselves in the Indian film industry with the presentation of social themes.^{[381][382]} Directors from Kerala, like Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Mankada Ravi Varma, G. Aravindan, Bharathan, P. Padmarajan, M.T. Vasudevan Nair, K.G. George, Priyadarshan, John Abraham, Ramu Karyat, K S Sethumadhavan, A. Vincent and Shaji N Karun have made a considerable contribution to the Indian parallel cinema. Kerala has also given birth to numerous actors, such as Mohanlal, Mammootty, Satyan, Prem Nazir, Madhu, Sheela, Sharada, Miss Kumari, Jayan, Adoor Bhasi, Seema, Bharath Gopi, Thilakan, Vijaya Raghavan, Kalabhavan Mani, Indrans, Shobana, Nivin Pauly, Sreenivasan, Urvashi, Manju Warrier, Suresh Gopi, Jayaram, Murali, Shankaradi, Kavya Madhavan, Bhavana Menon, Prithviraj, Parvathy, Jayasurya, Dulquer Salmaan, Oduvil Unnikrishnan, Jagathy Sreekumar, Nedumudi Venu, KPAC Lalitha, Innocent and Fahadh Faasil. Late Malayalam actor Prem Nazir holds the world record for having acted as the protagonist of over 720 movies.^[383] Since the 1980s, actors Mohanlal and Mammootty have dominated the movie industry; Mohanlal has won five National Film Awards (four for acting), while Mammootty has three National Film Awards for acting.^[384] Malayalam Cinema has produced a few more notable personalities such as K. J. Yesudas, K.S. Chitra, M.G. Sreekumar, Vayalar Rama Varma, V. Madhusoodanan Nair, M.T. Vasudevan Nair and O.N.V. Kurup,^[385] the last two mentioned being recipients of Jnanpith award, the highest literary award in India.^[386] Resul Pookutty, who is from Kerala, is the only Indian to win an Academy Award for Best Sound Mixing, for the breakthrough film *Slumdog Millionaire*. As of 2018, Malayalam cinema has got 14 awards for the best actor, 6 for the best actress, 11 for the best film, and 13 for the best film director in the National Film Awards, India.^[387]

Literature

The Sangam literature can be considered as the ancient predecessor of Malayalam.^[388] Malayalam literature starts from the Old Malayalam period (9th–13th century CE) and includes such notable writers as the 14th-century Niranam poets (Madhava Panikkar, Sankara Panikkar and Rama Panikkar),^{[389][390]} and the 16th-century poet Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan, whose works mark the dawn of both the modern Malayalam language and its poetry.^[391] For the first 600 years of Malayalam calendar, the literature mainly consisted of the oral Ballads such as Vadakkan Pattukal in North Malabar and Thekkan Pattukal in Southern Travancore.^[392] Designated a "Classical Language in India" in 2013,^[283] it developed into the current form mainly by the influence of the poets Cherussery Namboothiri,^{[393][394]} Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan,^[394] and Poonthanam Nambudiri,^{[394][395]} in the 15th and the 16th centuries of Common Era.^{[394][396]} Unnayi Variyar,^[397] a probable poet of the 17th/18th century CE, and Kunchan Nambiar, a poet of the 18th century

CE, have also influenced a lot in the growth of modern Malayalam literature in its pre-mature form.^[394] The Bharathappuzha river, also known as River Ponnani, and its tributaries, have played a major role in the development of modern Malayalam Literature.^[398]

Paremmakkal Thoma Kathanar and Kerala Varma Valiakoi Thampuran are noted for their contribution to Malayalam prose.^{[399][400][401]} The "triumvirate of poets" (Kavithrayam): Kumaran Asan, Vallathol Narayana Menon, and Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, are recognised for moving Keralite poetry away from archaic sophistry and metaphysics, and towards a more lyrical mode.^{[402][403][404]} The poets like Moyinkutty Vaidyar and Pulikkottil Hyder have made notable contributions to the Mappila songs, which is a genre of the Arabi Malayalam literature.^{[405][406]} The first travelogue in any Indian language is the Malayalam Varthamanappusthakam, written by Paremmakkal Thoma Kathanar in 1785.^{[407][408]} The prose literature, Malayalam journalism, and criticism began after the latter-half of the 18th century.^[407] Contemporary Malayalam literature deals with social, political, and economic life context. The tendency of the modern literature is often towards political radicalism.^[409] Malayalam literature has been presented with 6 Jnanapith awards, the second-most for any Dravidian language and the third-highest for any Indian language.^{[410][411]} In the second half of the 20th century, Jnanpith winning poets and writers like G. Sankara Kurup, S. K. Pottekkatt, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, M. T. Vasudevan Nair, O. N. V. Kurup, and Akkitham Achuthan Namboothiri, had made valuable contributions to the modern Malayalam literature.^{[412][413][414][415][416]} Later, writers like O. V. Vijayan, Kamaladas, M. Mukundan, Arundhati Roy, Vaikom Muhammed Basheer, have gained international recognition.^{[417][418][419][420]}

Cuisine

Kerala cuisine includes a wide variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes prepared using fish, poultry, and meat. Culinary spices have been cultivated in Kerala for millennia and they are characteristic of its cuisine.^[421] Rice is a dominant staple that is eaten at all times of day.^[422] A majority of the breakfast foods in Kerala are made out of rice, in one form or the other (idli, dosa, puttu, pathiri, appam, or idiyappam), tapioca preparations, or pulse-based vada.^[423] These may be accompanied by chutney, kadala, payasam, payar pappadam, appam, chicken curry, beef fry, egg masala and fish curry.^[167] Porotta and Biryani are also often found in restaurants in Kerala. Thalassery biryani is popular as an ethnic brand. Lunch dishes include rice and curry along with rasam, pulisherry and sambhar.^[424] Sadhyam is a vegetarian meal, which is served on a banana leaf and followed with a cup of payasam.^[425] Popular snacks include banana chips, yam crisps, tapioca chips, Achappam, Unni appam and kuzhalappam.^{[426][427][428]} Seafood specialties include karimeen, prawns, shrimp and other crustacean dishes.^[429] Thalassery Cuisine is varied and is a blend of many influences.

Media

The media, telecommunications, broadcasting and cable services are regulated by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).^[430] The National Family Health Survey – 4, conducted in 2015–16, ranked Kerala as the state with the highest media exposure in India.^[431] Dozens of newspapers are published in Kerala, in nine major languages,^[432] but principally Malayalam and English.^[433] Kerala has the highest media exposure in India.^{[434][435]} The most widely circulated Malayalam-language newspapers are Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi, Deshabhimani, Madhyamam, Kerala Kaumudi, Mangalam, Chandrika, Deepika, Janayugam, Janmabhumi, Siraj Daily and Suprabhaatham. Major Malayalam periodicals include Mathrubhumi Azhchappathippu, Vanitha, India Today Malayalam, Madhyamam Weekly, Grihalakshmi, Dhanam, Chithrabhumi and Bhashaposhini.

DD Malayalam is a state-owned television broadcaster. Multiple-system operators provide a mix of Malayalam, English, other Indian languages, and international channels. Some of the popular Malayalam television channels are Asianet, Asianet News, Asianet Plus, Asianet Movies, Surya TV, Surya Movies, Mazhavil Manorama, Manorama News, Kairali TV, Kairali News, Flowers, Media One TV, Mathrubhumi News, Kappa TV, Amrita TV, Reporter TV, Jaihind, Janam TV, Jeevan TV, Kaumudy TV and Shalom TV. With the second-highest internet penetration rate in India,^[436] Digital medias including Social medias and OTT services are a main source of information and entertainment in the state. A sizeable People's science movement has taken root in the state, and such activities as writer's cooperatives are becoming increasingly common.^{[129][437]} BSNL, Airtel, Vodafone Idea Limited, Jio are the major cell phone service providers.^[438] Broadband Internet services are widely available throughout the state; some of the major ISPs are BSNL, Asianet Satellite Communications, Reliance Communications, Airtel, Vodafone Idea Limited, MTS, RailWire and VSNL.



Malayala Manorama office in Kottiyam, Kollam

Sports

By the 21st century, almost all of the native sports and games from Kerala had either disappeared or become just an art form performed during local festivals; including Poorakkali, Padayani, Thalappandukali, Onathallu, Parichamuttukali, Velakali, and Kilithattukali.^[439] However, Kalaripayattu, regarded as "the mother of all martial arts in the world", is an exception and is practised as the indigenous martial sport.^[440] Another traditional sport of Kerala is the boat race, especially the race of Snake boats.^[439]



The annual snake boat race is performed during Onam on the Pamba River

Cricket and football became popular in the state; both were introduced in Malabar during the British colonial period in the 19th century. Cricketers, like Tinu Yohannan, Abey Kuruvilla, Chundangapoyil Rizwan, Sreesanth, Sanju Samson and Basil Thampi found places in the national cricket team. A cricket franchise from Kerala, the Kochi Tuskers, played in the Indian Premier League's fourth season. However, this team was disbanded after the season because of conflicts of interest among its franchises.^{[441][442]} Kerala has only performed well recently in the Ranji Trophy cricket competition, in 2017–18 reaching the quarterfinals for the first time in history.^{[439][443]} Football is one of the most widely played and watched sports with huge support for club and district level matches. Kochi hosts Kerala Blasters FC in the Indian Super League. The Blasters are one of the most widely supported clubs in the country as well as the fifth most-followed football club from Asia in social media.^{[444][445][446]} Also, Kozhikode hosts Gokulam Kerala FC in the I-League as well as the Sait Nagjee Football Tournament. Kerala is one of the major footballing states in India along with West Bengal and Goa and has produced national players like I. M. Vijayan, C. V. Pappachan, V. P. Sathyam, U. Sharaf Ali, Jo Paul Ancheri, Ashique Kuruniyan, Muhammad Rafi, Jiju Jacob, Mashoor Shereef, Pappachen Pradeep, C.K. Vineeth, Anas Edathodika, Sahal Abdul Samad, and Rino Anto.^{[447][448][449][450][451]} The Kerala state football team has won the Santhosh Trophy seven times; in 1973, 1992, 1993, 2001, 2004, 2018, and 2022. They were also the runners-up eight times.^[452]

Among the prominent athletes hailing from the state are P. T. Usha, Shiny Wilson and M.D. Valsamma, all three of whom are recipients of the Padma Shri as well as Arjuna Award, while K. M. Beenamol and Anju Bobby George are Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award winners. T. C. Yohannan, Suresh Babu, Sinimol Paulose, Angel Mary Joseph, Mercy Kuttan, K. Saramma, K. C. Rosakutty, Padmini Selvan and Tintu Luka are the other Arjuna Award winners from Kerala.^{[439][453]} Volleyball is another popular sport and is often played on makeshift courts on sandy beaches along the coast.^[454] Jimmy George was a notable Indian volleyball player, rated in his prime as among the world's ten best players.^[455] Other popular sports include badminton, basketball and kabaddi.^[456] The Indian Hockey team captain P. R. Shreejesh, ace goalkeeper hails from Kerala. International Walkers from the state include K. T. Irfan.^[457]

For the 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup in India, the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium (Kochi), was chosen as one of the six venues where the game would be hosted in India.^[458] Greenfield International Stadium at located at Kariavattom in Thiruvananthapuram city, is India's first DBOT (design, build, operate and transfer) model outdoor stadium and it has hosted international cricket matches and international football matches including 2015 SAFF Championship.^[459]

Tourism

Kerala's culture and traditions, coupled with its varied demographics, have made the state one of the most popular tourist destinations in India. In 2012, National Geographic's Traveller magazine named Kerala as one of the "ten paradises of the world"^{[460][461]} and "50 must see destinations of a lifetime".^[462] Travel and Leisure also described Kerala as "One of the 100 great trips for the 21st century".^{[460][463]} In 2012, it overtook the Taj Mahal to be the number one travel destination in Google's search trends for India.^[464] CNN Travel listed Kerala among its '19 best places to visit in 2019'.^[465] Kerala was named by TIME magazine in 2022 among the 50 extraordinary destinations to explore in its list of the World's Greatest Places.^[466]

Kerala's beaches, backwaters, lakes, mountain ranges, waterfalls, ancient ports, palaces, religious institutions^[467] and wildlife sanctuaries are major attractions for both domestic and international tourists.^[468] The city of Kochi ranks first in the total number of international and domestic tourists in Kerala.^{[469][470]} Until the early 1980s, Kerala was a relatively unknown destination compared to other states in the country.^[471] In 1986 the government of Kerala declared tourism an important industry and it was the first state in India to do so.^[460] Marketing campaigns launched by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation, the government agency that oversees the tourism prospects of the state, resulted in the growth of the tourism industry.^[472] Many advertisements branded Kerala with the tagline Kerala, God's Own Country.^[472] Kerala tourism is a global brand and regarded as one of the destinations with highest recall.^[472] In 2006, Kerala attracted 8.5 million tourists, an increase of 23.7% over the previous year, making the state one of the fastest-growing popular destinations in the world.^[473] In 2011, tourist inflow to Kerala crossed the 10-million mark.^[474]

Ayurvedic tourism has become very popular since the 1990s, and private agencies have played a notable role in tandem with the initiatives of the Tourism Department.^[471] Kerala is known for its ecotourism initiatives which include mountaineering, trekking and bird-watching programmes in the Western Ghats as the major activities.^[475] The state's tourism industry is a major contributor to the state's economy, growing at the rate of 13.3%.^[476] The revenue from tourism increased five-fold between 2001 and 2011 and crossed the ₹ 190 billion mark in 2011. According to the Economic Times^[477] Kerala netted a record revenue of INR 365280.1 million from the tourism sector in 2018, clocking an increase of Rs 28743.3 million from the previous year. Over 16.7 million tourists visited Kerala in 2018 as against 15.76 million the previous year, recording an increase of 5.9%. The industry provides employment to approximately 1.2 million people.^[474]

The state's only drive-in beach, Muzhappilangad Beach in Kannur, which stretches across 5 kilometres (3.1 mi) of sand, was chosen by the BBC as one of the top six drive-in beaches in the world in 2016.^[478] Idukki Dam, the world's second arch dam, and Asia's first is at Idukki. The major beaches are at Kovalam, Varkala, Kozhikode, Fort Kochi, Cherai, Alappuzha, Ponnani, Kadalundi, Tanur, Chaliyam, Payyambalam, Kappad, Muzhappilangad and Bekal. Popular hill stations are at Ponmudi, Wayanad, Vagamon, Munnar, Peermade, Ramakkalmedu, Arimbra, Paithalmala of Kannur district, Kodikuthimala, and Nelliampathi.^[479] Munnar is 4,500 feet above sea level and is known for tea plantations, and a variety of flora and fauna.^[480] Kerala's ecotourism destinations include 12 wildlife sanctuaries and two national parks: Periyar Tiger Reserve, Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary, Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary, Thattekad Bird Sanctuary, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Kadalundi Bird Sanctuary, Karimpuzha Wildlife Sanctuary, Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary, Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary, Ervikulam National Park, and Silent Valley National Park are the most popular among them.^[481] The Kerala backwaters are an extensive network of interlocking rivers (41 west-flowing rivers), lakes, and canals that centre around Alleppey, Kumarakom, Ponnani, Nileshwaram, and Punnamada (where the annual Nehru Trophy Boat Race is held in August), Pathiramanal a small island in Muhamma. Padmanabhapuram Palace and the Mattancherry Palace are two nearby heritage sites.^{[482][483]}

See also



- [Outline of Kerala](#)
- [South India](#)
- [Dravidian peoples](#)
- [List of municipal corporations in Kerala](#)
- [List of taluks of Kerala](#)
- [List of urban local bodies in Kerala](#)
- [List of districts of Kerala](#)
- [List of revenue divisions of Kerala](#)

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- [Official website \(https://www.keralatourism.org/\)](https://www.keralatourism.org/) of Kerala Tourism

General information

-  Geographic data related to [Kerala \(https://www.openstreetmap.org/relation/2018151\)](https://www.openstreetmap.org/relation/2018151) at OpenStreetMap

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