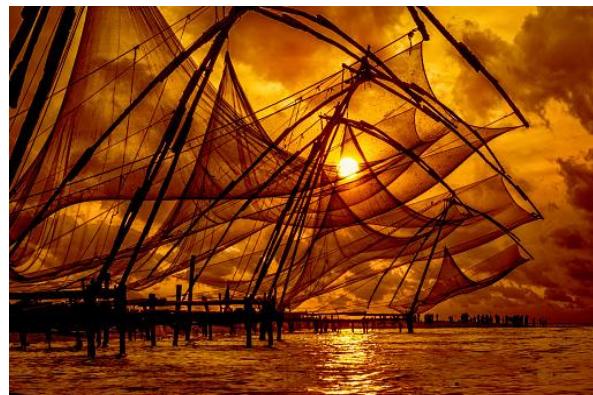


KERALA TOURISM



PLACES TO VISIT IN KERALA

1. ALAPPUZHA (ALLEPPEY)



Alappuzha has always been a vital trade centre since ancient times. These days it has become one of the most sought out tourist destinations in the State. Thanks to its unique backwaters, boat races, beaches and an assortment of marine products, it is a must-visit for all who seek to explore Kerala's vast beauty. Alappuzha offers a great climate and a surreal view of the majestic water bodies that it is surrounded by. The houseboat industry of Alappuzha is amongst the most famous in the world.

★ Vembanad Lake



Vembanad Lake is quite at the top of the list of the most famous attractions of Kerala, and rightly so. On an ideal day, you can spot tourists lazing on decks of the many houseboats that are intrinsic to the lake. An absolute luxury, spending some time at the lake, also takes one closer to the tiny villages dotting the landscape around. It, of course, is a photographer's delight as well. India's famous Nehru Trophy Boat Race is hosted on the waters of this lake, pulling in enthusiasts from all over the country and the world.

★ Alleppey Light House



Known for its breathtaking 360-degree views, the Alappuzha Lighthouse(Alleppey lighthouse) is an old-world charm. It is 4 km away from the main town lying on the sea bridge facing the Arabian sea coast. The 1862 lighthouse has a museum that preserves old equipment like oil lamps and items that testify to its 150-year-old journey. Constructed using laterite stones and teak, the Allepey Lighthouse is 30 meters high and can hold up to 25 people at a time. The spiralling staircase with over 100 wooden steps is worth climbing for the magnificent view of Allepey Beach and surrounding areas.

2. ERNAKULAM



Ernakulam refers to the eastern, mainland portion of the twin cities of Ernakulam-Kochi in central Kerala, India. Located on the coast of the Arabian Sea, Ernakulam is a booming business metropolis. It is often referred to as the commercial capital of Kerala. Ernakulam has been a part of human settlements since the Stone Age. Rock-cut caves and dolmens are still a part of this city. Ernakulam was ruled by the Chera Dynasty and later, by the Kingdom of Cochin.

★ Fort Kochi



Fort Kochi is a seaside town in the south-western part of Main Kochi which is known for its old-world colonial charm. The place still holds on to every single cultural change it has gone through over the centuries. We can see the remnants of British rule all over the country. The tourists flock here all around the year to have a glimpse of how Portuguese or Dutch colonialism affected parts of our country. This quaint city is dotted with European structures and has an overall ambience that keeps reminding you of the colonial powers that once ruled over the place. To date, it has the vibe of an ancient colonial city with its toy-town like streets, colourful and charming buildings and a picturesque view out at the beach - much like the small towns of southern Europe.

★ Hill Palace



Hill Palace was built in 1865 by the Maharaja Of Cochin and is now the largest archaeological museum in Kerala. The official capital of the Kingdom of Kochi was located previously in Thrissur and the royal office of Maharaja, as well as the court, were all located in the city. However, as per ritualistic customs, the seat of the Queen of Kochi (Penvazhithampuran) was seen as Royal capital as Kochi royal family had matrilineal traditions and the queen was regarded as sovereign of the state under whose authority the King ruled. Since 1755, the Queen and her retinue lived in Tripunithura, thereby making the city as official capital. Also, Prince Rama Varma was raised in Tripunithura, thereby preferred to live in the city even after his coronation as King, rather than moving to Thrissur. Thus for his benefit, a royal office was constructed in 1865. Initially, it started off as a royal office, court building and offices of royal secretaries and nobles of the court, soon more and more structures were added to the main structure for various purposes. Soon, an imperial residence building was also constructed for the residence of the King and his immediate family though other members of the Cochin Royal family had their own allocated bungalows and official residences.

3. THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



The city of Thiruvananthapuram is located in the South of Kerala and is the capital of Kerala- God's Own Country. Thiruvananthapuram in Malayalam literally translates into the "abode of Lord Anantha". Proudly retaining its age-old charm, Thiruvananthapuram is an evergreen city spread over seven hills. The Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple, in the heart of the city, is devoted to the deity Lord Anantha. The city is a must on the itinerary of any visitor to South India. Trivandrum or Thiruvananthapuram offers Padmanabhaswamy temple, Napier Museum, and Akkulam, anchuthengu, meenmutti waterfall, neyyar dam, peppara, ponmudi, poovar, varkala & Kovalam Beach are places of interest to the tourists. Thiruvananthapuram is an ideal location for medical tourism, as there are more than 100s of recognised Ayurvedic centres in and around the city.

★ Sri Pathmanabhaswamy Temple



Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple or Sree Ananda Padmanabhaswamy Temple is one of the most famous Lord Vishnu Temples in Kerala, located in East Fort Thiruvananthapuram. Lord Vishnu is enshrined here in the eternal sleep of Yog Nidra lying on Sri Anantha, the hooded snake. Sree Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple is one of the 108 holy places of Lord Vishnu. The capital city of Kerala – Thiruvananthapuram is named after the Lord in this temple. The word Thiruvananthapuram literally means “The land of Sree Anantha Padmanabhaswamy”. Followers believe that the Lord has personally come in disguise and had saved many times the Travancore Kingdom from the clutches of enemies. Recently Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple was in news for the discovery of hidden treasure worth billions of dollars which also underlined it as a must-visit attraction in Kerala.

★ Kovalam Beach



Kovalam is an internationally renowned beach with three adjacent crescent beaches. It has been a favourite haunt of tourists since the 1930s. A massive rocky promontory on the beach has created a beautiful bay of calm waters ideal for sea bathing. The leisure options at this beach are plenty and diverse. Sunbathing, swimming, herbal body toning massages, special cultural programmes and catamaran cruising are some of them. The tropical sun acts so fast that one can see the faint blush of coppery tan on the skin in a

matter of minutes. Life on the beach begins late in the day and carries on well into the night. The beach complex includes a string of budget cottages, Ayurvedic health resorts, convention facilities, shopping zones, swimming pools, Yoga and Ayurvedic massage centres. Accommodation facilities for tourists at Kovalam range from five-star hotels to budget hotels and the choice of food available at restaurants and cafeterias range from Continental varieties to South Indian delicacies.