

## PLACES OF INTEREST

### PLACES OF INTEREST IN AND AROUND KUMARAKOM

#### THE VEMBANAD LAKE

The Vembanad Lake is the second largest fresh water lakes in India. It flows through the verdant lands of Kerala and offers one of the best backwater cruises. Most of the flora and fauna in this region flourishes around this supply of fresh water. The lake also acts as a balancing tank against floods, and its wooded banks, temptingly invite a visitor to explore more. The boats that ply on the lake vary from the large stitched-hull, cargo carriers with domed mat-roofs to houseboats. A cruise along the Vembanad Lake is strongly recommended – the resort has its own luxury houseboat, the Laguna, which can be taken out for overnight cruises on the lake. Speedboats are also available.

#### PATHIRAMANAL

Pathiramanal (sands of midnight), an enchanting island on the lake, can be accessed by boat from here. This 40 acre island on the backwaters is home to many rare varieties of migratory birds from different parts of the world. According to mythology a young Brahmin dived into the Vembanad Lake to perform his evening ablutions and the water made way for the land to rise from below. The island can be accessed only by boat. A cruise along the Vembanad Lake is the best way to experience the sanctuary.

#### KUMARAKOM BIRD SANCTUARY

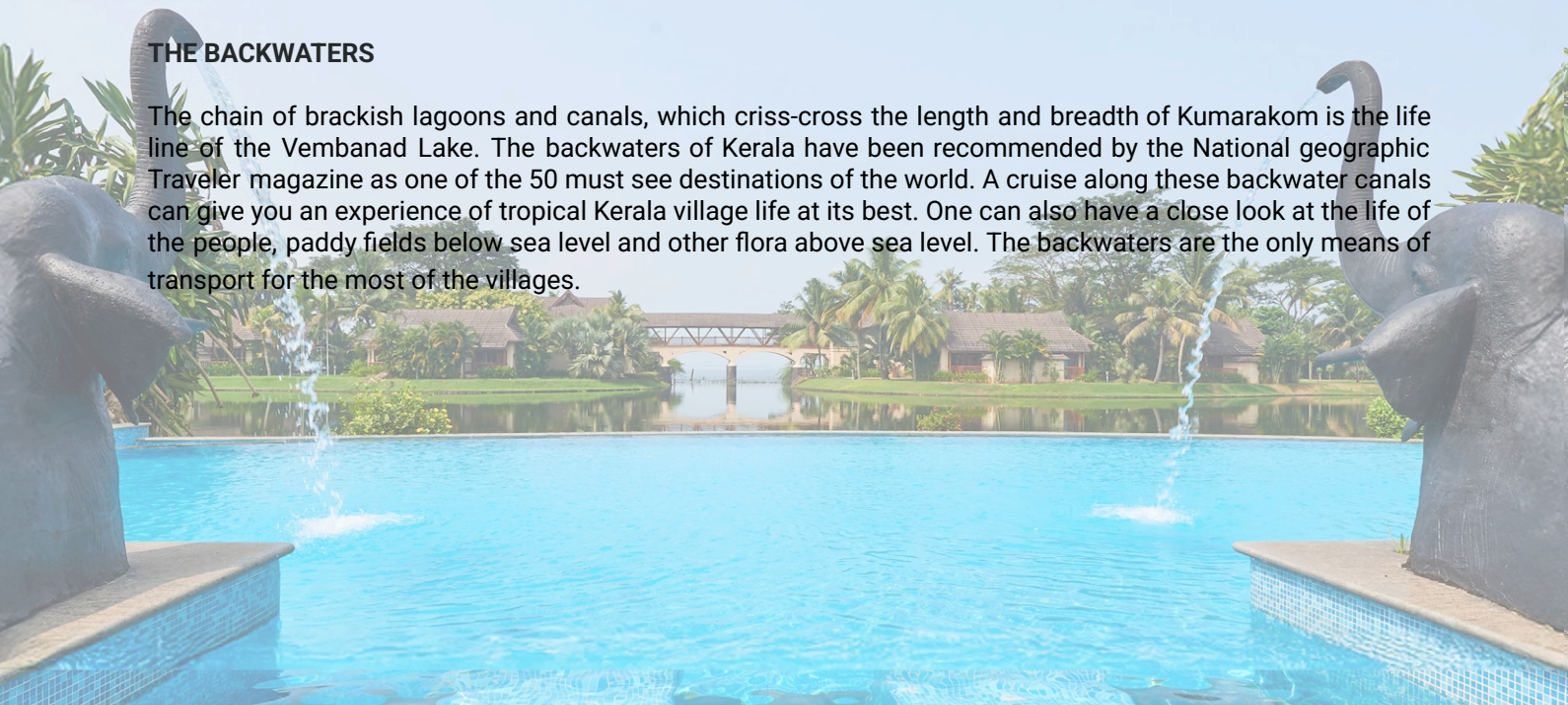
The bird sanctuary is situated 5 kilometers west of the resort on the Vembanad Lake. The sanctuary teems with local waterfowls and other wintering migratory birds. The sanctuary houses 40 varieties of birds including 20 varieties of migratory birds from different parts of the world and the most famed ones are the Siberian storks and the Australian Ibises. The best time to visit the sanctuary is from 0600 hours to 0800 hours and the best season is October to March.

#### BAY ISLAND DRIFT MUSEUM

A unique Museum to display a miraculous collection of Nature's Art, initially shaped by sea waves and then by the imagination of an artist through a rare and innovative art form, is functioning at the scenic village of Kumarakom, Kottayam. A visitor would find in the Bay Island Driftwood Museum a huge collection of elegant wooden/root sculptures of marvelous shapes compatible with nature. This amazing collection represents a work of art which was pioneered by a lady post graduate teacher. The Museum inculcates in students the qualities of imagination, creativity, originality and initiation to produce useful articles out of materials normally considered waste.

#### THE BACKWATERS

The chain of brackish lagoons and canals, which criss-cross the length and breadth of Kumarakom is the life line of the Vembanad Lake. The backwaters of Kerala have been recommended by the National geographic Traveler magazine as one of the 50 must see destinations of the world. A cruise along these backwater canals can give you an experience of tropical Kerala village life at its best. One can also have a close look at the life of the people, paddy fields below sea level and other flora above sea level. The backwaters are the only means of transport for the most of the villages.





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### KOTTAYAM

The name Kottayam is derived from the word 'Kotta' which means 'Fortress' in Malayalam. The old town of Kottayam was originally founded on the hilltop now known as Kunnumpuram. The small hamlet developed within the walls of the fort and thus was derived the present name from the words 'Kottackk Akam' which literally means "Inside the Fortress". It is commonly believed that down the ages this gradually assumed its present form, Kottayam. It has the distinction of being the first fully literate town in the whole of India. The first English school was started here by the missionaries of the Church Mission Society of the erstwhile Anglican Church. Kottayam has been a centre of learning and in recognition of this fact, the Government established the Mahatma Gandhi University here. It was in Kottayam that Benjamin Bailey, a Christian Missionary, established the first vernacular Printing Press in Kerala in 1820 A.D. It is the home of a number of newspapers and magazines including India's largest selling vernacular daily, 'Malayala Manorama'. Kottayam was the first town in India to become fully literate which triggered a mass movement in the state to transform Kerala into the first fully literate State in India.

### ALAPPUZHA (ALLEPPEY)

This charming coastal town of Alappuzha, formerly called Alleppey, also once known as the "Venice Of The East", is around 40 kilometers from the resort. With its labyrinth of canals, bridges, silver beaches, and cheerful people it makes for a memorable day out. Alappuzha is a never-ending panorama of lush green paddy fields, towering coconut trees, and long canals that offers enjoyable boat cruises to Kollam along the scenic Vembanad Lake. Alleppey is famous for products of coir (natural fiber produced from coconut husk) – it is the largest producer of coir in the world and also Asia's biggest producer of umbrellas. Alleppey boasts of a rich colonial heritage which can be seen in the old colonial buildings found even today.

### COCHIN (KOCHI)

Cochin is situated in Ernakulam district in the state of Kerala. Ernakulam is also the name of a town - the administrative capital of Ernakulam district - but, for all practical purposes Ernakulam and Cochin, generally, refer to the same. From time immemorial, the Arabs, British, Chinese, Dutch, and Portuguese have left indelible marks on the history and development of Cochin. Over the years, Cochin has emerged as the commercial and industrial capital of Kerala and is perhaps the second most important city on the west coast of India. Cochin, renowned as the 'Queen' of the Arabian sea, is 60 kilometers north of the resort. Informally, Cochin is also referred to as the Gateway to Kerala. One can visit the famous Jewish synagogue, the oldest in India, the Dutch Palace and the Jew street at Mattanchery famous for handicrafts antiques and spices. The St. Francis Basilica, where Vasco De Gama has been buried and Chinese fishing nets at Fort Cochin are the main tourist attractions. The main shopping area for textiles, jewelry and consumer goods is in the town





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### **CHURCHES IN AND AROUND KUMARAKOM**

#### **ST. MARY'S CHURCH – VALIYA PALLI**

Dedicated to St. Mary, the Valiya Palli is a church built in 1550 for the Knanaya Orthodox Syrians situated in Thazhathangadi, 2 kilometers from the centre of the town. It is famous for its 8th century Persian cross and the Pahalavi inscription on the cross.

#### **ST. MARY'S CHURCH – CHERIYA PALLY**

Cheriya Pally is one of the few old churches that still exist in the near original state. Cheriya Pally which literally means small church in fact much bigger than Valiya Pally (big church) - which is close by. This church was built in 1579 by the local Rajah, ruler of the native state for his Christian subjects and it shows strong temple architectural influences including an outer wall of the type found around temples with niches for the oil lamps. It is interesting to see the Christian and the Hindu synthesis in the design of this church. The facade of the church seems to be influenced by the Portuguese with galleries, pillars and cornices.

#### **BHARANANGANAM**

It is an important Christian pilgrimage centre where the mortal remains of Sister Alphonsa (1916-1946) were interned in a chapel next to the St. Mary's Church. This 1000- year old church features an attractive Grotto of the Virgin Mary.

#### **ST.MARY'S CHURCH, ATHIRAMPUZHA**

This is situated 25 kilometers north of Kumarakom and this ancient church is dedicated to St. Mary. The statue of St. Sebastian installed here is considered very ancient. During the days of the Portuguese three statues were brought to Kerala. The legend says that the smallest of them was brought to Athirampuzha by local traders. This is known as Adiyelpicha Roopam (representing St. Sebastian) after being flogged by his persecutors. The original church here is said to have been constructed in 1080 A.D.



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### **GOOD SHEPHERD CHURCH**

Situated 15 kilometers from Kumarakom, the construction work of this church was completed in 1882. It was renovated in 1964. It is constructed in the Italian style.

### **MANNANAM**

This is 23 kilometers from Kumarakom.. There is St. Joseph's Monastery, which is associated with Fr. Kuriakose, one of the saintly figures of the Syrian Catholic Church of Kerala. One can also see here the oldest printing press in the state- the St. Joseph's Press which printed 'Nasrani Deepika', one of the oldest newspapers in Kerala.

### **ST. GEORGE'S ORTHODOX CHURCH, PUTHUPALLY**

Aruvithura is located 50 kilometers east of Kumarakom. The St. George's Church here is one of the oldest churches in Kerala. It is believed that this church was constructed by St. Thomas. The reconstruction of this church was done in the 16th century A.D.

### **ST.THOMAS VALIYA PALLY AT PALAI**

Situated in Palai about 45 kilometers away from Kumarakom, it is generally accepted that this church was built in 1002, and is in the name of St. Thomas. This church was destroyed by the Muslim invaders in 17th century A.D. and was reconstructed in the next century.

### **VIMALAGIRI CHURCH, KOTTAYAM**

The foundation stone of the church was laid in 1956 and the construction was completed in 1964. This church constructed in the Gothic style is an example of excellence in architectural beauty; the main tower has a height of 172 ft., which is considered, as the highest church tower in the State.





## MOSQUES IN AND AROUND KUMARAKOM

### **THE PAZHAYAPALLY AND THE PUTHUPALLY**

There are two famous mosques - Pazhaya-palli and Puthurpalli at Changanassery. The Pazhayapalli is said to be more than 1000 years old and it is constructed at the site, which was donated by king of Thekkumkur. A Bhagavathi temple and Catholic church are situated in the neighborhood of this mosque. This shows the religious harmony among the local residents. The Puthurpalli is about 400 years old. The followers of the different religions celebrate the festival 'Chandanakkudam'.

### **THAZHATHANGADI**

The mosque at Thazhathangadi is one of the ancient mosques in India. The belief is that Malik Dinar had built this mosque about 1000 years back. The artistic value of this mosque is unmatched.

## GURUDWARA IN AND AROUND KUMARAKOM

### **THEVARA GURUDWARA**

The one and only gurudwara in Kerala is located in Perumanoor, close to Thevara, hardly three kilometers away from the heart of Kochi city.



## TEMPLES IN AND AROUND KUMARAKOM

### **THE THIRUNAKKARA MAHADEVA TEMPLE**

This ancient temple constructed by the Kottayam king is dedicated to Lord Shiva is 15 kilometres from Kumarakom. The present temple is believed to be more than 800 years old. One can see several mural paintings in this temple.

### **LORD SHIVA TEMPLE, ETTUMANOOR**

This famous and ancient Shiva temple is 25 kilometers from Kumarakom. The temple is famous for its architectural style and intrinsic carvings. The outer wall of the sanctum sanctorum has the entire Ramayana depicted in the form of wooden carvings. The mural paintings are of the highest order. The temple is more than 3000 years old and the present structure is 600 years old.

### **VAIKKOM TEMPLE**

Vaikkom, 20 kilometers away from Kumarakom, is historically a famous town situated on the eastern bank of the expansive Vembanad Lake. It was once the capital of the erstwhile kingdom of Vadakkumkur. The ancient Mahadeva Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva here has carried its name far and near and it is a sacred place of worship. According to legend, Parasurama, the mythological creator of Kerala, constructed it.

### **KUMARANELLOOR**

Situated 20 kilometers away from Kumarakom, Kumaranelloor is famous for the Karthyayani (Devi) temple. This ancient temple's festival on 'Trikarthika' day is important and the display of lights in the evening (Karthika Villaku) is the highlight of this celebration.

### **SARASWATHY TEMPLE, PANACHIKADU**

Situated 22 kilometers away from Kumarakom, this temple is famous for Saraswathy Pooja. Saraswathi is worshipped as the goddess of learning. On the day of Durgasthami, the pooja veppu is performed with books arranged in a decorated room and all sorts of study and work are given up for the day. The Mahanavami Day is devoted to the worship of Saraswathi and thousands of people arrive at this temple to initiate their children to learning.





### **THIRUVARPU**

Situated 8 kilometers west of Kumarakom, this temple is devoted to Lord Krishna. Offerings start as early as 3 o' clock in the morning. The Vilakkeduppu that is carrying lighted lamps by girls during the festival is famous.

### **KIDANGOOR**

Situated 40 kilometers north-west of Kumarakom, the Subrahmanya Swamy temple here attracts a large crowd of worshippers on the day of Shashti every month. The Chakiarkooth performed here is a specialty.

### **PERUNNAI**

Situated about 35 kilometers south of Kumarakom, this is also one of the Subrahmanya Swamy temples. The festival here is called 'Dhanu'. Hundreds of worshippers specially women attend the 'shashti' here



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### HILL STATIONS IN AND AROUND KOTTAYAM

#### VAGAMON

Vagamon is situated at an elevation of 1100 meters above sea level. It is about 75 kilometers from Kumarakom. Vagamon is a popular spot for trekkers. It is a very ideal tourist spot surrounded by the greenery of tea gardens, beautiful meadows, deep puzzling valleys and dales. The enchanting hill station dotted with tea gardens will soon be one of India's foremost eco-tourism projects. This tourist place also has to offer Thangal Para, the Indo-Swiss Project and Kurisumala Ashram. Grass covered hills, velvet lawns and the cool mountain air make Vagamon a perfect holiday retreat. A curious blend of religious mysticism and European legacies, this hillside village is a haven of tranquility.

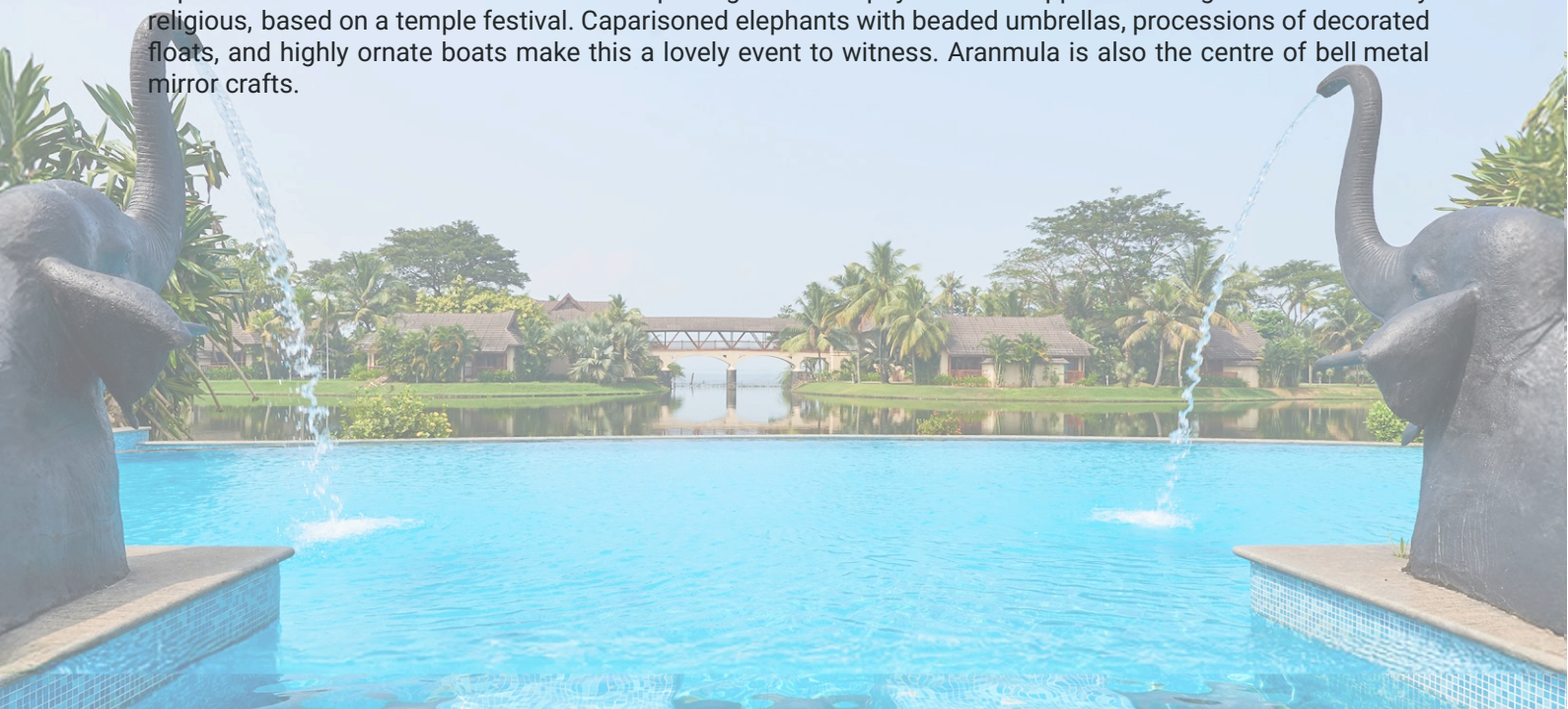
### SNAKE BOAT RACES OF KERALA

The backwaters host many special events during August to September. The electrifying races by carved wooden boats set the backwaters on fire. Boat races are held in connection with Onam, the harvest festival in August / September. Scores of long snake boats and other smaller crafts participate in these events. The largest team sport in the world, the snake boat races are preceded by colorful water parades. Usually a snake boat is manned by four helmsmen, 25 singers and 100 – 125 oarsmen who row in unison to the fast rhythm of the vanchipattu (song of the boatman). Thousands of people crowd the water's edge to cheer the huge black crafts as they slice through the waters to a spectacular finish. The oldest of these events have curious legends and myths attached to their origin. Myths closely linked to the rustic people and their beliefs.

**Nehru Trophy Boat Race** - named in honor of the late Prime Minister of India, Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, is the most exciting of all the boat races. It is held on the second Saturday of August. During the 'Onam' festival, many boat races including the spectacular Aranmula boat-race are conducted in the Alappuzha region.

#### ARANMULA

65 kilometers m from Kottayam, Aranmula is the site of the splendid Onam festival boat races, usually in early September. These races unlike the more sporting Nehru Trophy race at Alappuzha in August are essentially religious, based on a temple festival. Caparisoned elephants with beaded umbrellas, processions of decorated floats, and highly ornate boats make this a lovely event to witness. Aranmula is also the centre of bell metal mirror crafts.





## THINGS TO DO WHILE AT KUMARAKOM

### SIGHTSEEING OPTIONS FROM THE RESORT

**Package:** **Backwater Cruise in a Houseboat**

*A day cruise or an overnight cruise on the backwaters of Vembanad Lake, the second largest fresh water lake in India in our luxury houseboat – The Laguna - an ideal experience for families and honeymoon couple to enjoy the backwaters of Kerala.*

**Rate:** **Breakfast cruise** – INR 20000.00 + taxes three hours for two people

**Lunch cruise** – INR 24000.00 + taxes for four hours for two people

**Overnight cruise** – INR 27000.00 + taxes, departing at noon and returning at 0900 hours the next day for two people.

**Package:** **Backwater Cruise in a Speedboat**

Cruise over the beautiful blue skies, close to the lush green paddy fields below sea level.

**Rate:** INR 7000 + taxes for two hours in a speed boat (capacity 03 persons)

**Suggested Time:** **2 Hours** – between 0700 to 1100 Hours & 1500 to 1730 Hours

**Package:** **Church Tour**

Cheriyapalli, Valliyapalli, Vimalagiri Church, Athirampuzha Church and Mannanam Church, Ancient churches of Kerala

**Rate:** INR 8500/- + taxes per couple in an Innova

**Suggested Time:** Duration - 04 Hours - 0900 to 1300 Hours & 1500 to 1900 Hours



**Package: In Search of Moksha**

*A rare chance to seek Moksha by visiting four famous Shiva temples, Vaikom, Kaduthuruthy, Ettumanoor & Thirunakkara in one stretch - a guided tour in traditional Kerala attire, special Pooja's will be conducted for the guest as a part of the package*

**Rate:** INR 9500 + taxes per couple in an Innova

**Suggested Time:** Duration - 04 Hours - 0600 to 1000 Hours & 1600 to 2000 Hours

**Package: Bird Sanctuary Trek & Bird watching**

*Egrets, King-fisher, Cormorants, Siberian Teals, Terns, Teals, Night Herons, Bulbul, Bitterns, Australian Ibis and more*

**Rate:** INR 3000 + taxes per couple in a luxury car

**Suggested Time:** Duration - 02 Hours - 0600 to 1000 Hours & 1600 to 1700 Hours

**Package: Lunch at an Island Farm House**

*Experience a Syrian Christian Lunch at an Island Farm house in the Vembanad Lake with the owners, visit Vechoor Church & a local Coir making unit. This 1500 acre island is the last island reclaimed in the back waters. The farm has coconut, Nutmeg, vanilla and other spices.*

**Rate:** INR 8500 + taxes per couple (Extra person Rs. 3500 + tax)

**Suggested Time:** Duration - 04 Hours - 1200 to 1600 Hours





**Package: Kottayam City Sightseeing Trip**

*A guided trip to Thirunakkara temple, Valiyapalli, Cheriyaapallai and the Thazhathangadi Mosque for a glimpse of ancient temple architecture and Churches & Shopping for spices, Kerala Sarees, Coir and Rubber products.*

**Rate:** INR 6000 + taxes per couple in an Innova

**Suggested Time:** Duration- 04 Hours - 0900 to 1300 Hours & 1500 to 1900 Hours

**Package: Visit to Alleppey – The Venice of The East**

*A visit to a coir factory, Portuguese and Colonial Godowns, architecture, English Club, Alleppey Port and more*

**Rate:** INR 8500/-+ taxes per couple in an Innova

**Suggested Time:** Duration – 5 Hours - 0900 to 1300 Hours

In addition, the resort offers a wide range of leisure facilities.

**These include billiards, cycling, fishing, volleyball, badminton, yoga sessions, cooking demonstrations, cocktail demonstrations, board and card games.**

