**ALLEPPEY**

Alleppey is one of the most important tourist centers in the state, with a large network of inland canals earning it the sobriquet "Venice of the east". These large network of canals provide Alleppey its lifeline. Alleppey was one of the busiest centers of trade in the past with one of the best known ports along the malabar coast. Even today it retains its charm as the centre for Coir carpet industries and prawn farming. Alleppey the ideal headquarters for backwater tourism as well as for visits to the lovely church filled town of Kottayam, and the town of Aranmula, famous for its historic Aranmula Snake Boat Race which is an annual event.

Alleppey is also known for its spectacular snake - boat races held on the second Saturday of August, every year. This competition - the Nehru boat race takes its name from India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who inaugurated in 1952. It is excitement all around as snake - boats , each manned by over a hundred oarsmen, cut through the waters like wind. The event is a tremendous success with tourists and the local population alike.

The boat cruise along the backwaters of Alleppey give one first hand experience of the life style; toddy tapping, fishing for small fry, Coir-making, prawn farming etc., which remains more or less unchanged over the years.