Kerala Tourism

The Ultimate Tourism Guide

DATSY DAVIES

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Datsy Davies

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God's Own Country

PREFACE

Kerala is famous for its natural greenery and progress the state achieved in education and health in comparison to other states of India. Kerala promotes tourism in its purest form. Kerala is a safe state to travel and the locals know English very well. This book takes you through this amazing heavenly land of greenery and festivals.

I acknowledge with thanks all organizations, institutions and regulatory authorities whose materials were sought / consulted in the preparation of this Book. Although care has been taken in preparing this book, yet the possibility of errors, omissions and discrepancies cannot be ruled out. I would personally be grateful to the users and readers for offering their suggestions for further refinement.

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Karukutty
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Chapter I
Kerala Tourism

Kerala is India’s most idyllic state popularly known as God’s Own Country visited by scores of tourists to spend a memorable holiday amidst serene and scenic natural ambiances. Secluded beaches, palm fringed backwaters, mist clad hills stations, tropical forests, exotic wildlife, cuisine, fairs and festivals make Kerala a beautiful tourist destination of India.

Kerala is situated on the southwestern coast of India, a country in South Asia. This tropical paradise enjoys a unique topography with Arabian sea, a part of the Indian Ocean on the west and the Western Ghats on the east.

With the Arabian Sea in the west, the Western Ghats towering 500-2700 meters in the east and networked by more than 40 rivers, Kerala enjoys unique geographical features that have made it one of the most sought after tourist destinations in Asia.

A long shoreline with serene beaches, tranquil stretches of emerald backwaters, lush hill stations and exotic wildlife, virgin waterfalls, sprawling plantations, paddy fields, ayurvedic health holidays, enchanting art forms, magical festivals, historic & cultural monuments, an exotic cuisine... All of which offer you a unique experience. And what's more, each of these charming destinations is only a couple of hours drive from the other – everything in the same basket which not other destination can offer you.

Kerala's history is closely linked with its commerce, which until recent times revolved around its spice trade. Celebrated as the Spice Coast of India, ancient Kerala played host to travellers and traders from across the world including the Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, French and the British. Almost all of them have left their imprint on this land in some form or the other - architecture, cuisine, literature.

Wedged between the Western Ghats on the East and the Arabian Sea on the West, Kerala is a destination of a lifetime. The timeless beauty of the palm fringed beaches of Kovalam, the majesty of the undulating hills of Munnar, the serenity of the pristine backwaters of Kumarakom and the enchanting woods and forests of Thekkady will have you bowled over.

Tourism is a major phenomenon of the modern society, which has emerged as an economic activity of immense global importance. Perhaps there is hardly any other field of activity where so many people are involved directly or indirectly. Tourism has found a niche for itself as an effective instrument for generating employment, earning revenue and foreign exchange, enhancing environment preserving culture and tradition thereby facilitating overall development. Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries. In 2000, there were 699 million international tourist arrivals throughout the world, an increase of 7.4% over 1999. There has been strong growth in foreign travel to developing countries during recent years and this trend is expected to continue. Economic diversification and technological improvement have created a conducive environment for tourism development in the present age of globalization. India and South East Asia have been gearing up to achieve significant progress in this field owing to a number of encouraging factors. India has vast geographical spread and great historical and cultural heritage, which are excellent condition for growth in this sector.

Kerala has emerged as one of the prime tourism destinations on the national and international map and is considered as the tourism trendsetter in the country. The availability of plenty of natural resources, skilled manpower,

supportive entrepreneurial community, strong local-self-governments, civil society organizations, multitude of micro enterprises, streams of professionals and academicians, responsible media and responsive tourism industry, provide the state an ideal setting to implement and practice sustainable tourism models in the state. As the best way to maximize the positive impacts of tourism and minimize the negative ones, Responsible Tourism is gaining widespread acceptance across the world today. Initiative under the label Responsible Tourism was launched in 2007 in four destinations – Kovalam, Kumarakom, Thekkady and Vythiri on a pilot basis. In 2012, the initiative was extended to three more destinations – Kumbalanghi, Bekal and Ambalavayal. Kumarakom, in the Kerala, has the pride of being the first place on the country to have successfully implemented Responsible Tourism. In 2013, Kerala Tourism was conferred with United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism for its global leadership in creating innovative initiatives for sustainable tourism at Kumarakom. Kumarakom was also honoured by Ministry of Tourism; Govt of India for the best Responsible Tourism initiative in Kerala and it also bagged the national award for rural tourism. Following the success of Kumarakom and other destinations, Responsible Tourism is today being implemented in other tourist destinations across the State. This holistic form of tourism is helping travellers, the local population and the trade derives the greatest possible benefits from tourism, without causing any ecological or social damage.

Kerala is worth a visit simply to enjoy the rich and varied cuisine. A haven for foodies everywhere, Kerala is famous for its spicy or coconut based

dishes. Sadya or the midday meal is a delightful treat for every traveler visiting Kerala. This traditional vegetarian spread is considered an integral part of celebratory occasions like Hindu weddings or festivals, sadyas are now being served in hotels as well. Sadya is an elaborate feast with the number of side dishes ranging from 16 to 50. Rice plays the central role in a sadya. A sadya ends when payasam, a popular sweet dish in Kerala, is served. There is usually a succession of different types of payasams in a sadya, and sometimes up to 5 payasams are served in one sitting. A sadya is traditionally served on a banana leaf, with the tapering end of the leaf pointed to the left side of the guest. Similar to sadya, Kerala cuisine is also famous for its varied breakfast dishes.

But unlike the sadya whose origins are unique only to Kerala, a large part of the Keralite breakfast spread has been borrowed from foreign places. When the foreigners came to establish colonies in Kerala, the natives started incorporating their dishes, vegetables and even their cooking style into their cuisine. This eventually resulted in these foreign dishes becoming part and parcel of every Malayali's diet. Kerala cuisine is known for its extensive list of delicious vegetarian dishes.

Major Attractions

The unique variety of attractions in Kerala ensures that this tropical south Indian state is high on the list of people's places to see in India. Its unique culture and extremely picturesque setting, which contrasts with the fast-paced modern world, make Kerala the perfect destination for relaxing and rejuvenating! Don't miss these top Kerala attractions and things to do.

1. Cruise the Backwaters in a Houseboat

At trip to Kerala wouldn't be complete without a trip along the Kerala backwaters in a houseboat. The lush green palm-fringed landscape, diverse wildlife, and houses and villages that line the backwaters make a journey along these waterways seem like a journey through another world. It's one of the most tranquil things you can do.

2. Experience Traditional Village Life

Kerala's famous backwaters are dotted with small villages where it feels like

time has stood still. Visiting them is a very different way of experiencing the backwaters and the life that exists among them. You can even have a meal with a local family there and hear their stories.

3. Get an Ayurvedic Treatment

Ayurveda is the medical side of yoga. It's India's traditional natural healing system, which has been practiced for over 5,000 years. Most places that offer Ayurvedic treatment are located in Kerala, due to the climate and abundant supply of medicinal plants and herbs in Kerala. Whether it's a simple massage that you're after, or a treatment for a medical problem, Kerala is the place.

4. Get a Cooking Lesson or Take a Food Tour

Kerala is renowned for its cuisine, featuring delicious seafood with coconut flavor. If you're not content to simply feast on it and would also like to learn how to cook Kerala style, you'll be pleased to know that there's a wide range of options available.

5. Watch Kathakali

Kathakali is a very unusual and ancient form of dance-drama that's traditional to Kerala. You won't get to see performers dressed up like this every day, that's for sure! The look, with its red bloodshot eyes, borders on grotesque. The movements of the dance are subtle, yet they tell a meaningful mythological story. Performers are required to undergo intense training, including hours of eye exercises, when learning the art of Kathakali.

6. Catch a Theyyam Performance

Kannur is known for its mysterious masked spirit-possession theyyam. The *theyyam* season runs from October until May.

7. Watch Kerala's Ancient Martial Arts

Kalaripayattu is an ancient martial arts from practiced in Kerala. It features strikes, kicks, grappling, preset forms, weaponry and healing methods.

8. Watch a Snake Boat Race

For a few months every year during the monsoon season, Kerala comes alive with colorful snake boat races. Typical snake boats are 100 to 120 feet long, and hold around 100 rowers. Each of the villages in the region has its own snake boat, which they take great pride in. Every year the villagers get together and race the boats along the lakes and rivers.

9. Taste Tea

Tea production is big business in Kerala. The state has two of the top tea plantations in India viz., Munnar and Wayanad. You can stay in atmospheric accommodations on a tea plantation, see how tea is processed, and of course sample it. If you're feeling energetic, the hills surrounding both these places have great trekking opportunities as well.

10. Try Some Toddy

Toddy, Kerala's indigenous alcoholic drink, is made from the sap of palm trees. The sap is collected by a tapper, who climbs the tree and drains it into a container. It's sweet when extracted but on fermentatation will turn sour and give a kick. Toddy (also called *kallu*) is served in small thatched shops all over Kerala. Tasty Kerala cuisine is dished up with the toddy.

11. Explore Historic Fort Kochi

Known as the "Gateway to Kerala", Kochi is an enchanting city that's had an eclectic influence. Arabs, British, Dutch, Chinese, and Portuguese have all left their mark there. The architecture and historical sites in Fort Kochi draw most of the visitors to the area. Fort Kochi is an excellent place to explore on foot or bicycle.

12. Catch a Festival

Kerala temple festivals are elaborate and exotic, with the highlight being the decorated elephants. The festivals feature large processions of bejeweled elephants, drummers and other musicians, colorful floats carrying gods and goddesses, and fireworks.

13. Chill at the Beach

The attractive thing about the beaches of Kerala is that they're not as crowded or as developed as the beaches or more touristy areas in India, particularly Goa. Varkala Beach has a spectacular cliff setting.

14. Spot Wildlife and Enjoy Nature

Kerala is home to Periyar National Park, one of the most popular one in India. Unlike many national parks in India it stays open during all seasons and offers a wide range of eco-tourism activities so you can really explore nature.

15. Admire Mural Paintings

The art of colorful mural paintings, done on the walls of temples, churches and palaces in Kerala, dates back to the 9th century. Its roots lie in the ancient Dravidian art of Kalamezhuthu. Kerala has the second largest collection of mural sites in India.

Society and Cultural Values

The State of Kerala is India's most advanced society with almost hundred percent literacy. Kerala also offers World-class health care systems. India's lowest infant mortality and highest life expectancy rates are to the credit of this small State. Kerala also boast of highest physical quality of life in India. Peaceful and pristine, Kerala is India's cleanest state. Bestowed with a pleasant and equable climate throughout the year, Kerala is a tropical land with the coast running down its entire length and the Western Ghats forming a protective barrier against the dry winds from up north. The monsoons (June-September & October-November) and summer (February-May) are the seasons markedly experienced here, while winter is only a slight drop in temperature from the normal range of 28-32°C.

With the Arabian Sea in the west, the Western Ghats towering 500-2700 meters in the east and networked by forty-four rivers, Kerala enjoys diverse geographical features. Kerala is divided into three geographical regions highlands, which slope down from the Western Ghats onto the Midlands of undulating hills and valleys into an unbroken coastline with many picturesque backwaters, interconnected with canals and rivers. The Western Ghats are nowhere more than 120 kms from the sea. Kerala is one of India's

most progressive states in terms of social welfare and quality of life. The State boasts of one of India's highest literacy rates, highest life expectancy and lowest child mortality rates. The literacy rate for women is one of the highest in all of Asia. Enjoying a unique cosmopolitan viewpoint, the people of Kerala, at all levels of society, have greater access to services and opportunities - as well as a greater say in their governance.

Reaching Kerala

How to reach Kerala

Kerala is a small state that lies in the south western part of India. This south Indian state abounds in natural beauty. To its west is the Arabian Sea, and to the east is the Western Ghats mountain range, that separates the State of Tamil Nadu from Kerala.

Kerala can be accessed by air; the state has three major international airports. One in the southern part, Thiruvananthapuram International Airport, one in central Kerala, the Cochin International Airport and the other in northern part, Karipur or Calicut International Airport.

The state can easily be accessible by railway networks and road transport. What sets Kerala apart from the other Indian states is its considerably higher density of population. Scantily populated areas are hard to find in Kerala, due to the explosion of small villages and towns. Malayalam is the primary language of communication in Kerala. As a result of this, most of the places in Kerala are named in Malayalam.

Tourist Visa on Arrival to Kerala

You can plan your holidays in Kerala even on a short notice, with fewer hurdles! Apply for your Visa Online, get the 'Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA)' and fly to Kerala. Tourist Visa on Arrival (T-VoA) enabled with Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) has been introduced for Foreign Tourists coming to Kochi and Trivandrum from 43 countries including Australia, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, UAE & USA for a short stay of 30 days and the State of Kerala is the only state in India where two airports, having the T-VoA enabled with ETA. Other countries are Brazil, Cambodia, Cook Islands, Djibouti, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Finland, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Kingdom of Tongo, Laos, Luxembourg, Mauritius, Mexico,

Myanmar, Niue, Oman, Palestine, Papua & New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Kiribati, Republic of Korea (South Korea), Republic of Marshall Islands, Republic of Nauru, Republic of Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Ukraine & Vietnam.

The T-VoA enabled with ETA will allow tourists to apply and pay the fee for the visa online, without having to travel to the Indian missions in their home countries. Applicants who are approved will receive the official travel authorization via email and only need to present a printed copy of this to the immigration authorities upon their arrival in India.

Accommodation

Kerala is among the most popular tourist destinations in the world. It has been named as one of the "Fifty Destinations of a Lifetime" by National Geographic Traveler. Tourists can enjoy the tropical climate, serene backwaters, warm hospitality, and seaside scenery when they stay at hotels in Kerala. If you're traveling to Kerala popularly known as “God's Own country”, and are wondering where to stay, then just relax… for hotels in Kerala offer you the ultimate rejuvenating experience. Kerala hotels offer a range of options from luxury

Hotels in Kerala for the exclusive traveler, to cheap, budget hotels for the backpacker. Luxury Hotels offer international standards of comfort and all the necessary facilities, as well as Kerala's specialties like ayurveda therapy. This is sure to make travelers feel completely rejuvenated, after being treated by traditional Ayurveda massages. The intermediate range of hotels offers accommodation to all classes of tourists - from families to honeymooners, from pilgrimage travelers to business travelers. Hotels provide a comfortable stay to all travelers to Kerala. Budget hotels in Kerala offer affordable, basic accommodation for travelers who want a no-frills experience. The pleasures of roughing it are easier in the warm tropical climate of Kerala, where the cost of living is low and the beaches, sunsets and beautiful weather, are free - courtesy Mother Nature.

When to be there in the ‘God’s Own Country’?

Festivals in Kerala

One of the highlights of visiting Kerala is experiencing the state's unique festivals. The most popular ones occur during the following months:

- **July to September: Snake boat races.** The biggest race, called the Nehru Cup, is always held on the second Saturday of August every year. The Splash monsoon carnival and elephant feeding ritual also take place during July.
- **August/September: Onam festival.** The biggest festival of the year in Kerala, celebrations last for around two weeks.
- **October to May: Theyyam.** The small town of Kannur, in northern Kerala, is known for its mysterious masked spirit-possession *theyyam* rituals.
- **February to April/May: Elephant festivals.** The festivals feature large processions of bejeweled elephants, drummers and other musicians, colorful floats carrying gods and goddesses, and fireworks. The most well known elephant festival, the Thrissur Pooram, takes place in late April or early May each year.

Best Time to visit

You are always welcome to the God's Own Country. Kerala is undoubtedly one of the most popular tourist destinations in India, and it has something to offer all year round. Hence, the best time to visit Kerala will really depend on what you want to see and do there. The weather does need to be taken into account though, as the climate is a hot tropical one that receives rainfall from two monsoons.

Weather and Climate

The weather in Kerala can be split into three distinct seasons:

- A. The cool dry season from December to February. (This is the peak tourist season).
- B. The hot, humid summer season from March to May. (You'll be sweating a lot).
- C. Monsoon season (southwest and northeast monsoons) from May to November. (Intermittently heavy rain).

If you're looking to save money, Kerala is one of the best places in India to visit during the off-season from May to September. Most hotels and home stays offer substantial discounts (20-50%) and very attractive packages to draw tourists at this time of year.

Kerala is actually a very rainy state, which no doubt contributes to its lush greenery. Rain is commonly received during nine months of the year there!
The southwest monsoon arrives in Kerala in late May each year. If you want to chase the monsoon in India, head to beaches in Kovalam. It's one of the first places in India to receive monsoon rain, and you can watch the storm roll in. Rain from the southwest monsoon usually eases up by August and there's a break in the rain during September. However, the northeast monsoon arrives by October. It produces shorter but much more intense bursts of rain, which can last until early December. If you want to avoid the summer heat in India, the hill station of Munnar in Kerala is a good option.

Monsoons in Kerala

Monsoons in Kerala do not take the pattern of incessant rains continuing for weeks. Virtually it rains for a few hours with sunny interludes. Occasionally the rains might stretch on for a few days but the respite of sunshine is never far away. People look forward to seeing the sun peep through the wet palm fronds and rain drenched green. These golden interludes provide an equilibrium to life's natural flow. Kerala has mainly two rainy seasons. The Southwest Monsoon that arrives in the month of June is called Edavappathy, as it comes in the middle of the month of Edavam on the Malayalam Calendar. Mid October witnesses the arrival of the Northeast Monsoon. In the Malayalam calendar this month is called Thulam and hence the name Thulavarsham meaning the 'The Rains in Thulam'. Now the gathering rain clouds are from the Bay of Bengal. These bearers of rain hurry to Kerala through the Palakkad Gap in the Western Ghats. The swirling, jostling, billowing dark messenger of life sailing on the wings of northeast winds is a breathtaking sight to behold.

As nature recoups with the rains, it is rejuvenation time for humans too. According to Ayurveda, Monsoon is the best season for rejuvenation therapies. During the Monsoon season, the atmosphere remains dust-free and cool, opening the pores of the body to the maximum, making it most receptive to herbal oils and therapy. The art forms of Kerala demand the

utmost dedication and training. These native art forms require complete control over each nerve of the body. As part of this training the artists undergo ayurvedic therapies. Special herbal oils and medications are applied on the body of the artist during the Monsoon time to ensure muscle flexibility and dexterity of movements.

Fort Kochi

Chapter II
EVER GREEN KERALA

Must Visit High Ranges

2.1 Munnar Hills

In Munnar, the palm trees, sunny paddy fields and water channels of Kerala's plains give way to rushing waterfalls, mountain forests and moody weather. The overlapping hills of tea plantations, which seem to go on forever, are covered in a green carpet of bushes. Munnar produces about 10% of India's tea. Munnar Tea is often served black, its flavour subtle and nuanced. British made this area a summer retreat before recognising its suitability for tea production due to its weather, elevation and terrain. The peculiarity of the terrain is that it slants at 45 degree. With poor Indian workers, the British broke through the forest to plant tea and lay a mountain rail line.

Kannan Devan Hills, Munnar.

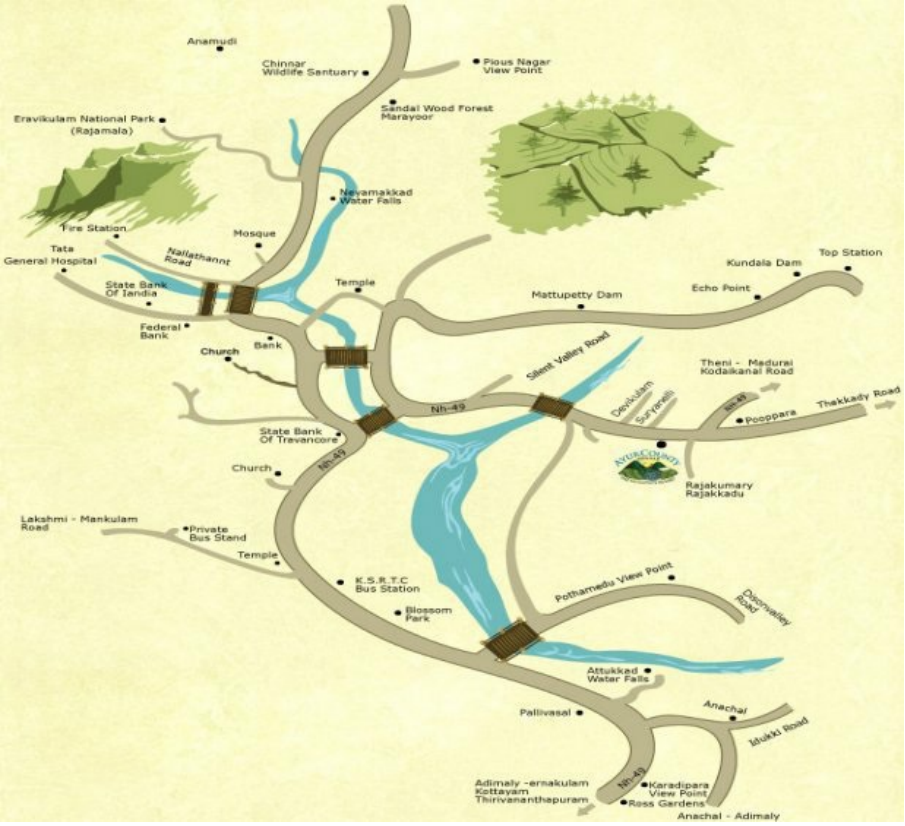
Tourists come to this beautiful hill station to see the vast tea plantations of the area. Munnar is really beautiful and traditional. It is a good place to stay to experience the countryside lifestyle. Munnar is popular for honeymooners. Munnar is also famous for its tea plantations, many of which were started by the British. "Kannan Devan" brand of TATA is the most famous Tea Brand in Munnar.

The strobilanthus ("Neelakurinji" in Malayalam), a blue flower which blooms only every 12 years, is found in this region. It bloomed last in December 2006. Now no other go but to wait till 2018 to see the gorgeous blooming of the flowers after long 12 years.

The Magic of Munnar: "Neelakurinji", a blue flower which blooms once in every 12 years

Eravikulam national park is one of the main tourist attraction, where you can find the endangered species of Nilgiri Tahr (mountain goat). A trek to Rajamala ("King of hills" in Malayalam), in the morning is sure to spot a few friendly mountain goats. You can also find Gaur, Langur, Lion-tailed macaque, and Elephants depending on the season and time of travel.

The town is divided into two parts, Old Munnar and Munnar. Munnar is a breathtakingly beautiful tourist destination in God's own country - Kerala. Set at an altitude of 6000 feet in Idukki district, Munnar is the favored summer resort of foreign visitors to India. Munnar is full of unending tea plantations, valleys and mountains, exotic species of flora and fauna in its wild sanctuaries and forests aroma of spices. This beautiful destination is the place you would dream to visit and it is the place you would like to never to leave. Munnar is such a beautiful place in Kerala, which cannot be explained easily, you have to feel it. In this wonder dreamland, everything and anything will make us excited. The hills, the mist, the valleys, the streams, the waterfalls, tea plantations and many more.



It is a beautiful tea town accessible from Kochi and Coimbatore. The gorgeous hill station is ideally placed in the South Western Ghats of India. With an area of around 557 sq. kms., Munnar is the largest panchayat in Kerala. The region is placed at a height of around 1,500 m to 2,695 m above sea level and was once the summer capital of the British in South India. Mannar was later on developed for cultivating tea plantations.

Eravikulam National Park and the Nilgiri Tahr is considered to be the icon of tourism in Munnar. The national park is also famous for its Neelakurinji population. Adding to the relevance of Munnar as a favourate tourist destination of domestic and foreign tourists is the highest peak in South India, Anamudi.

Anamudi: Highest peak in south India adds to the beauty of Munnar

2.2 Nelliyampathy Hills, Palakkad

From the town of Nenmara in Palakkad district, the cloud-caressed peaks of the majestic Nelliyampathy hill ranges are a sight to behold. The height of the hills ranges from 467 meters to 1572 meters. To reach Nelliyampathy, one has to take the road starting from Nenmara that proceeds to the Pothundy Dam. There are about 10 hairpin bends that have to be negotiated on the way to Nelliyampathy.

The Pothundy Dam is a picturesque location with facilities for boating and is a nice option as a picnic place. As the Ghat road winds its way up to Nelliyampathy, at certain places there are viewpoints from where the vast stretches of Palakkad district are visible with its extensive paddy fields forming a verdant carpet. It also offers a splendid view of the Palakkad Gap, which is a geographical phenomenon in the Western Ghats formation in this region, bringing into view, parts of the adjoining State of Tamilnadu.

On the way up, those interested in bio farming can take a close look at the privately managed farms and also vast expanses of tea estates managed by different plantation companies. The hills of Nelliyampathy are also well known for its orange cultivation.

Privately owned hotels and resorts are located at various points, as one goes up the hills of Nelliyampathy. The bio-farms located here are a major landmark as one proceeds up before reaching the topmost point at Palagapandi estate. The estate has a quaint bungalow, built during the period of the British rule in India, and has now been converted into a private owned resort.

Not far away from Palagapandi is Seetharkundu where one can have a fantastic valley view, and a 100 meters high waterfall providing an added attraction. From Palagapandy, one can trek or go by jeep to reach Mampara; another breathtaking vantage point at Nelliyampathy. The area in and around Palagapandy estate has tea, cardamom and coffee plantations with adjoining hills allowing one to catch a glimpse of the wildlife in the form of Indian gaur, elephants, leopards, giant squirrel etc. and is also a paradise for birdwatchers.
Nearest railway station: Palakkad, about 56 KMs
Nearest airport: Coimbatore International Airport (Tamilnadu), about 55 km from Palakkad
Location - Lattitude:10.538952, Longitude: 76.69364

2.3 Ponmudi Hill Station, Thiruvananthapuram

Located within a short driving distance of Thiruvananthapuram, Ponmudi is an enchanting hill resort with narrow winding pathways and cool, green environs. Along with a beautiful array of mountain flowers, exotic butterflies and small rivulets, Ponmudi offers excellent opportunities for trekking. With its tea estates and mist covered valleys Ponmudi is a fast developing hill resort with cottages and dormitory accommodation facilities.

Nearest railway station: Thiruvananthapuram, about 61 km away
Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport, about 67 km away
Location - Lattitude:8.760902, Longitude: 77.110863

2.4 Vythiri Hill Station, Wayanad

Vythiri, located in the hill district of Wayanad, is a popular hill station in Kerala. The destination has earned the reputation of having vast areas of spice plantations, luxuriant forests and rich cultural traditions, especially that of the tribal communities. Vythiri, which still retains its immaculate natural wealth, makes it an excellent picnic spot for both locals and tourists.

Wayanad Ghats

Major attractions in Vythiri are:-

Karalad Lake (*About 8 km from Vythiri)*

An unusually quiet retreat, the lake offers facilities for angling and boating as well as a recreational park. The trek to this lake is also quite exciting.

Lakkidi (*About 55 km east of Kozhikode & 5 km south of Vythiri)*

The gateway to Wayanad, Lakkidi is situated 700 m above mean sea level, at the crest of the Thamarasseri Ghat Pass. Lofty peaks, gurgling streams and luxuriant forests add magic to the journey up the winding roads to this hill station.

Pookot Lake (A*bout 3 km from Vythiri)*

This perennial freshwater lake near Lakkidi is surrounded by lush evergreen forest. Kayaking, pedal and row boating, a freshwater aquarium, children's park, a handicrafts and spices emporium are among the tourist facilities available here.

Nearest railway station: Kozhikode (Calicut), about 63 km

Nearest airport: Calicut International Airport, about 73 km

Location - Lattitude:11.552017, Longitude: 76.038322

2.5 Athirappalli and Vazhachal, Thrissur

The most famous waterfalls of Kerala, Athirappalli and Vazhachal are situated on the Chalakudy River, which originates from the upper reaches of the Western Ghats. At the entrance to the Sholayar ranges is the largest waterfall in Kerala, Athirapally, which stands tall at 80 feet. Just a short drive from Athirapally, the Vazhachal waterfall is close to dense green forests that are home to many endangered and endemic species of flora and fauna.

Athirappalli Water Falls

The waterfalls are located on the edge of the Sholayar forest ranges are just 5 KMs apart. This is the only place in the Western Ghats where four endangered Hornbill species are seen. Athirappalli is about 63 KMs. from Thrissur and Vazhachal about 68 KMs.

Vazhachal Water Falls

Nearest Railway Station: Chalakudy, about 30 KMs away
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 53 km from Thrissur
Location - Lattitude:10.293301, Longitude: 76.565723

2.6 THEKKADY

Lying close to the plantations, in the rich jungles of Periyar in Thekkady is one of the world's most fascinating natural wildlife reserves - the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary. Spread across 777 sq. km, of which 360 sq. km is thick evergreen forest, the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1978. Noted for its geomorphology, diversity of wildlife and scenic beauty, the Reserve attracts visitors from all over the world.

The splendid artificial lake formed by the Mullaperiyar Dam across the Periyar River adds to the charm of the park. This is the only sanctuary in India where you can have the unique experience of viewing wildlife at close quarters from the safety of a boat on the lake. The greatest attraction of Periyar, however, is the herds of wild elephants that come down to play in the lake.

Murikkady (5 km from Thekkady):
Washed in fresh spice scented air, Murikkady is a panorama of cardamom, coffee and pepper plantations.

Vandiperiyar (18 km from Thekkady):
The River Periyar flowing through the centre of this town nourishes its vast tea, coffee and pepper plantations. A major trade centre, Vandiperiyar is also home to a number of tea factories. The Government Agriculture Farm and Flower Garden have a delightful array of rose plants, orchids and anthuria.

KUMILY (4 km from Thekkady):
This plantation town, closely associated with Thekkady, is situated on the outskirts of the Periyar Sanctuary. An important shopping centre and spice trade centre, the main bus station and most of the medium range accommodation in the Periyar region are in Kumily.

Pandikuzhi (5 km from Kumily):
This picturesque spectrum of exotic flora, fauna and gurgling streams is cradled between Chellarkovil and the Tamil Nadu border. A popular picnic spot, Pandikuzhi offers great opportunities for trekking and is a photographer's delight.

Chellarkovil (15 km from Kumily):
This sleepy little village with its breathtaking view of the plains and cascading waterfalls is a feast for the eyes. The village slopes down to the

famous coconut groves of Cumbum in neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

Vandanmedu (25 km from Kumily):
This is one of the world's largest auction centres for cardamom. A walk through the sprawling cardamom plantations of Vandanmedu is a heady experience.

2.7 Silent Valley (40 km northwest of Mannarkad):
The 89.52 sq. km national park is believed to be the sole surviving bit of evergreen forests in the Sahya Ranges. The peculiarity of the Silent Valley Forest is that it is devoid even of the chirping of cicadas. Vehicular transport is possible only up to Mukkali, nearly 24 km from the park. The rest of the way has to be covered on foot up to the source of Kunthipuzha, which flows through the valley before merging into River Bharathapuzha.

May Visit High Ranges

2.B1 Agasthyakoodam

Part of the Sahyadri ranges (Western Ghats) of mountains, Agasthyakoodam, at a height of 1,890 m above sea level, is the second highest peak in Kerala. Teeming with wildlife, the forests of Agasthyakoodam abound in rare medicinal herbs and plants, and brilliantly hued orchids. A bird watcher's paradise, this legendary mountain is accessible by foot from Kotoor, near Neyyar Dam and also from Bonakkad. Trekking to Agasthyakoodam is believed to be healthy, the very air here is supposed to have healing properties. It is believed that sage Agasthya, the mythological character lived here.

Women are not allowed up the peak and permission is required to trek. The season from December to April is advocated for trekking, for which a forest pass has to be obtained the wildlife office in Thiruvananthapuram.

Nearest railway station: Thiruvananthapuram Central, around 61 KMs.
Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport, around 69 KMs.
Location- Lattitude:8.803654, Longitude: 77.197952

2.B2 Gavi

Gavi Eco-Tourism a project of the Kerala Forest Development Corporation has caught the attention of tourists, mostly from European countries. The project is exclusive in many respects and the majority who visited was nature lovers and adventure tourists. Over a short period of time visitors to Gavi gradually increased, especially after 'Alistair International' the world acclaimed tourism major listed it among the leading eco-tourism centres and one of the must-see places in India.

A highlight of the Gavi eco project is the involvement of the local populace in its activities as guides, gardeners and cooks. This will provide livelihood for the locals and also will help to create awareness on conservation of nature. Gavi, located in Pathanamthitta district offers its visitors activities like trekking, wildlife watching, outdoor camping in specially built tents, and night safaris.

The road leading to the picturesque Gavi is blanketed by tea plantations, which itself is a refreshing experience. En route to Gavi are places of interest like Mundakayyam, Kuttikanam, Peermedu and Vandiperiyar from where the road deviates to Gavi.

Gavi Water Falls

Once you reach Gavi the serene eco-lodge 'Green Mansion' awaits you like a fairy to embrace you in its protective fold. From the 'Green Mansion', one can savour the spectacular view of the Gavi Lake and the adjoining forests. Besides the accommodation provided in 'Green Mansion' visitors can also try out the tree houses here and can even pitch tents amidst the wilderness. Here one can have outstanding trekking experiences, which are overseen by trained local people. Those who would love to be left alone can do so in the tranquil environs of Gavi or may even go canoeing in the placid waters of the lake or enjoy a breathtaking sunset. Visitors are usually provided vegetarian food and snacks, which further adds to the eco-friendly ambiance of the place.

The place is rich in flora and fauna. There are hills and valleys, tropical forests, sprawling grasslands, sholas, cascading waterfalls and cardamom plantations. Endangered species including the Nilgiri Tahr and Lion-tailed macaque are often sighted at the outskirts of Gavi. With more than 260 species of birds including the great pied hornbill, woodpecker, and kingfishers, Gavi is a heaven for birdwatchers.

Some of the breathtaking viewpoints at Gavi like the Valley View offer spectacular view of a deep ravine and the forest below. From Kochu Pampa,

a point near Green Mansion eco-lodge one can track the grazing Nilgiri Tahrs.

The famous pilgrim destination, Sabarimala is a short trek from Gavi. For those interested in observing the nocturnal wildlife, night safaris to Kullur, Gavi Pullumedu, Kochu Pampa, Pachakanam provide ample opportunities for wildlife viewing.

Another unique feature of Gavi is camping in the forests. One can pitch a tent in the camping site, which is a rarity in many Indian forests. As the dusk stretches into the silence of the night, one can feel the presence of wildlife in the middle of nowhere, an experience that cannot be explained in words. There are also tree top houses where one can enjoy the avian life to the fullest.

Active involvement of tribals in Gavi makes it a unique venture of its kind in the country. Traditional knowledge of the forest and its way of life helps Gavi to sustain its surroundings in its original state. Gavi is bound to cast its magical spell on every visitor and is surely a place that should not be missed in one's lifetime. Gavi is pristine, and it belongs to the wild, which is a reminder that visitors are responsible for their intentions and actions, which will have a bearing on the upkeep of Gavi for a long time to come.

Nearest railway station: Kottayam, about 114 KMs
Nearest airport: Madurai Airport (Tamil Nadu), about 140 KMs away and Cochin International Airport, about 190 KMs.
Location - Lattitude: 9.437208, Longitude: 77.166066

2.B3 Kuttikanam - an adventure tourism spot
Kuttikanam near Peermedu in Idukki is a place for adventure tourism and trekking, or even a languorous, tranquil break. This picturesque plantation town washed in the fragrance of cardamom is surrounded by lush, green hills.
Getting there

Nearest railway station: Kottayam, via Kollam - Theni Highway about 71 km
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 118 km
Location - Lattitude:9.57773, Longitude: 76.974106

2.B4 Peermedu, Idukki

Peermedu is a lovely hill station located about 40 km from Kumily, Idukki district in Central Kerala, at an altitude of 915 m above sea level. It is an ideal retreat in the Western Ghats and a choice break for tourists en route to the Periyar Tiger Reserve. This famous plantation town, takes its name from Peer Mohammed, a Sufi saint and close associate of the erstwhile royal family of Travancore.

Wide vistas of tea, cardamom, rubber and coffee plantations interspersed with silver cascades, sculptural rocks, meadows and mist-cloaked hilltops make Peermedu an unforgettable experience. The summer palace of Rajas of erstwhile Travancore is today an important monument here.The summer residence, now converted into a government guest house under the Department of Tourism, offers comfortable accommodation.

Peermede and its surroundings are suitable for trekking, cycling and horse riding. Kuttikanam a place for adventure tourism and trekking is just 3 km from Peermede.

Another attraction here is Thrissanku Hills, about 4 km away. The rolling hills, the lovely landscape and the gentle breeze make this a choice spot for long walks. The hills offer a breathtaking view of the sunrise and sunset.

Nearest railway station: Kottayam, about 54 KMs.
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 120 KMs.
Location - Lattitude: 9.590385, Longitude: 77.019140

Idukki – just for high range lovers

2.B5 Vagamon, Idukki

Have you visited beautiful, green Vagamon Are you thinking, "In a green country, what's the attraction of yet another verdant spot" Well, the point is Vagamon is not just any other verdant spot. Of course, you can get grassy hills, velvet lawns and cool mountain air in many other places but not the Vagamon kind; not just this exciting blend of religious mysticism and European legacy.

Like a lot of other beautiful things in life, Vagamon too has to be experienced, not read about or its stories merely listened to. What you've got

to do is get yourself some means of transport, head straight for Idukki district and then on to Vagamon. Once there, try taking off your shoes, closing your eyes and just listening to Vagamon. And when you're through with the mystic getting to know session, you could take a trek across the chain of three hills - the Thangal hill, the Murugan hill and the Kurisumala, important for Muslims, Hindus and Christians respectively. And don't miss the nice, little dairy farm of the Kurisumala monks.
Nearest railway station: Kottayam, about 75 km from Peermede
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 150 km from Peermede
Location - Lattitude:9.690952, Longitude: 76.904783

2.B6 WAGAMON (64 kms. from Kottayam)
This enchanting hill station at an elevation of 1100 meters above sea level is a trekker's paradise. This enchanting hill station on the Idukki - Kottayam border dotted with tea gardens and meadows, will soon be one of India's foremost Eco tourism projects. Breeding Centre of the Kerala Live stock Board is located in Wagamon.

2.B7 Chembra Peak
Chembra peak, the highest hill in Wayanad, is near Meppady town. The hills, rocks and valleys which contribute to the very unique character of Wayanad provide a lot for adventure tourism. Trekking to the Chembra peak is a risky mountaineering endeavor. Trekking to the top of this peak takes almost a day. Tourists can also stay one or two days at the top of the peak in temporary camps.

Chapter III
Festivals

Kerala temple festivals are elaborate and exotic with main attraction being

elephants and fireworks. Most Hindu temples in Kerala own elephants donated by devotees. Festivals form part of each temple's annual rituals. They're often a tribute to the temple's presiding God. Each festival has a different set of legends and myths behind it, depending on the temple’s God. Mostly each temple festival will last for 10 days. Shorter ones are also celebrated which may last for 1 to 3 days. While everyday temple rituals are modest, temple festivals take place on a grand scale and are a highlight on the social calenders of Kerala's population. The festivals feature large processions of jewelled elephants, drummers, musicians, floats and fireworks.

Detailed temple rituals are conducted by a tantri (the main temple priest) according to the temple god. Rituals involving the god statue in a Pallivetta (Royal Hunt) and Arattu (Holy Bath) are the focus of the festivals of some Kerala's major temples. In most festivals one can expect plenty of crowds, elephants, noise, and processions. Music is an important part of the temple celebrations. Cultural programs adds to the celebrations mood. During certain Poorams, Gods from surroundings temples make their annual visit on elephant back to pay their respects to the presiding temple God.

Among temples throughout Kerala, the biggest and most colorful festival takes place at Vadakkumnathan temple in Thrissur and is called Thrissur Pooram. It happens during the Malayalam month of Medam (April/May). In Kerala, festival dates are decided in accordance with the Malayalam calendar and the local traditions and customs. The date for celebrations mostly will keep changing from year to year. Besides there can be changes in the dates according the customs and rituals associated with each place of worship.

Festivals are true celebrations in God's Own Country. Those are occasions when grandeur prevails over the characteristic simplicity of the Kerala lifestyle. Be it any festival, new attire and robust feasts are a must for the celebrations. Besides being occasions for merry-making, festivals of Kerala have traditionally been preservers of the art and culture. Whether religious or social, traditional or modern, a festival is treated incomplete without an art event. It is just like having a desert after Dinner.

Temple Festivals

3.1 Thrissur Pooram

Venue: Thekkinkadu Maidanam in the heart of Thrissur Town.

This festival is held on the premises of the Vadakkumnatha temple, which is a classic example of Kerala style of architecture. Ilanjitharamelam, an amazing percussion ensemble featuring about 250 odd artistes, ushers in lakhs of music-lovers, who wave their hands in accordance to the rhythm generated by the traditional instruments of Kerala.

An astounding firework would light up the sky to provide a grand finale to two days of classic entertainment.
Nearest railway station: Thrissur (just 1 KM)
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 58 KMs from Thrissur

3.2 Nenmara Vallangi Vela

Venue: Nellikulangara Bhagavathy temple, Nenmara, Palakkad District.
An astounding festival of colours, art forms, fireworks and elephants, Nenmara Vallangi Vela, organised by two villages namely Nenmara and Vallangi, is pumped up by the friendly rivalry of these two regions. The festival provides an occasion to enjoy some of the colourful folk arts of this place such as Kummatti, Karivela and Andivela.

The fireworks let loose their fantabulous colours which illuminates not just the night sky but the minds of all those who witness the event standing in the dry paddy fields.

3.3 Uthralikkavu Pooram

Venue: Sree Ruthira Mahakalikavu Temple, Vadakkancherry, Thrissur District.

About 20 elephants in traditional attire line up with colourful parasols; swaying white tufts and peacock-feather fans is surely a spectacle. Sree Ruthira Mahakalikavu Temple is dedicated to Goddess Kali. Uthralikavu Pooram is the most famous event in the region. It is an 8 day celebration highlighted by day and night elephant processions. Traditional musical ensembles like the Panchavadyam and the Pandimelam add rhythm to these processions. The festival is famous for fireworks.

3.4 Arattupuzha Pooram

Venue: Arattupuzha Temple, Thrissur

Arattupuzha is a culturally significant village located in Thrissur District. Arattupuzha is 15 KMs from Thrissur Town and is renowned for this Annual Festival called Arattupuzha Pooram. The Arattupuzha Temple, dedicated to Lord Ayyappa is believed to be more than 3000 years old. Temple premises are the venue for the festivities. It is believed that during the festival period, Lord Ayyappa is visited by gods and goddesses of the neighbouring villages. This Annual Festival is considered as the mother of all pooram festivals in Kerala, due to its sheer magnitude. The excitement and devotion during the 7 day festival is on the last two days. Evening prior to the last day of the festival would have Sasthavinte Melam. This atmosphere would have the brilliance of the many brightly lit traditional lamps and also the huge flame bearing staffs.

Once Sasthavinte Melam is over, by early morning more than 50 elephants carrying deities of nearby temples would proceed to the adjoining paddy field

for the grand spectacle in front of a cheering crowd. The venue would soon become electrifying with groups of traditional percussion ensembles comprising Panchavadyam, Pacharimelam and Pandimelam playing their best possible beats and rhythms, while the caparisoned elephants bearing sequined, glittering umbrellas and white whisks make a delightful sight, as they stand patiently and entertain the crowd. By sunrise, the elephants carrying deities from neighbouring temples that had gathered at Arattupuzha would proceed to the nearby river for the aarattu ceremony. It is a ceremonial cleansing process by immersing the idol in the river accompanied by chanting of mantras and floral offerings. The last to undergo the aarattu would be the presiding deity of the Sree Sastha temple at Arattupuzha.

3.5 Chinakkathoor Pooram

Venue: Chinakkathoor Bhagavathi Temple, Palappuram, Palakkad District.

Chinakkathoor Pooram offers you an opportunity to witness a visual fiesta. This festival of colours and tuskers is held annually at the Sree Chinakkathoor Bhagavathy Temple, Palappuram in the North Kerala. Panchavadyam - the traditional Kerala orchestra - and various art forms like vellattu, theyyam, poothanum thirayum, kuthiravela, aandi vedan, karivela and so on add variety to the festival. Tholpavakoothu, a ritualistic shadow puppetry is another attraction.

Nearest railway station: Shoranur, about 20 KMs
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 103 KMs

3.6 Chettikulangara Bharani

Venue: Bhagavathy Temple, Chettikulangara, Alappuzha District.

One of the most amazing visual and cultural treats of Kerala, the renowned Chettikulangara Bharani, is the annual festival held at the Chettikulangara Temple during February / March. The temple here is dedicated to Goddess Bhagavathy. The kettukazhcha is what makes this event stand out from among the other festivals of the State. It is a ceremonial procession of brightly decorated structures. The dazzlingly decorated structures; the bigger ones assumed as horses and the smaller ones as chariots and cultural performances are the highlights of this spectacular pageant.

Nearest railway station: Mavelikara, about 7 KMs

Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport, about 113 KMs

3.7 Machattu Mamangam

Venue: Machattu Thiruvanikavu Temple, Vadakkancherry, Thrissur District.

It is a 5 day festival of pageantry and splendour. This temple is dedicated to Goddess Bhagavathy. The festival is a reflection of the spirit of joyfulness and fraternity of the region.

The main procession of the festival is on the concluding day on which decorated effigies of horses called kuthirakolams are brought to the temple by the devotees. These vibrantly adorned effigies are welcomed by the people with cheers.

Nearest railway station: Vadakancherry, about 5 KMs
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 58 KMs

3.8 Aanayoottu at Vadakkumnathan Temple

Venue: Vadakkumnathan Temple, Thrissur.

It is hard to find a place in the world where elephants are loved, revered and groomed as in Kerala. Elephants are an integral part of Kerala culture. The presence of richly adorned elephants transforms many festivals in Kerala into a lively and grand affair, attracting thousands of people. This ritualistic feeding ceremony (locally known as Aanayoottu) takes place inside the premises of the famous Vadakkumnathan temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, situated in the heart of Thrissur city.

On the festival day, elephants are brought inside the premises of the Vadakkumnathan temple for the special feast. Here, the elephants are lined-up in a single row and facing them would be thousands of people in an excited mood and ready with offerings in their hands to feed the elephants. The special feed for the elephants is basically made of sugarcane, rice, ghee, coconut, jaggery and Ayurvedic medicines. This is prepared as per Ayurvedic principles, enhancing the well-being of the domesticated elephants.

The ceremony is also rooted in the belief that worshiping the elephants and giving them delicious and healthy food is a way to propitiate Lord Ganesha, the elephant-faced God, who removes obstacles in one's life.

Nearest railway station: Thrissur Railway Station (just 1 KM)

Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport is about 47 KMs

3.9 Guruvayur Aanayottam

Venue: Guruvayur Sree Krishna Temple, Guruvayoor, Thrissur District.

Anayottam (elephant race) as it is called in the Malayalam language marks the beginning of the annual Guruvayur festival. It is celebrated in the month of February / March. The winning elephant will be given the honour to carry the thidambu (the replica of the idol of Lord Krishna) on all special occasions for one year.

Nearest railway station: Thrissur, about 28 KMs

Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 80 KMs

3.10 Thaipooyam Mahotsavam, Koorkancherry

Venue: Sree Maheswara Temple, Koorkenchery, Thrissur District.
The spectacular kavadiyattom (richly decorated wooden arches of different shapes and sizes) starts in the morning and nearly ten groups, each comprising 30 ambalakkavadi and 60 pookkavadi participate. The kavadiyattam will go on till noon, followed by an elephant procession. This takes place again at night and goes on till dawn. A dazzling fireworks display marks the conclusion of the festival.
Nearest railway station: Thrissur, about 2 KMs
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 58 KMs from Thrissur

3.11 Kalpathi Ratholsavam

Venue: Sree Viswanatha Swamy Temple, Kalpathi, Palakkad District.

This annual chariot festival is locally known as Ratholsavam. Kalpathi is a traditional Tamil Brahmin settlement in Kerala. The temple dedicated to Lord Viswanatha or Shiva is believed to be 700 years old. The annual chariot festival usually falls in the month of November. Vedic recitals and cultural programmes render a unique ambience for the place.

On the last 3 days, the three elaborately decorated huge temple chariots take the attention of all. Devotees would then gather to draw the chariots through the streets of Kalpathi village. It will be just one chariot that will be pulled on the first day, followed by two on the second and three on the last day of the festival.

3.12 Mandala Pooja at Sabarimala

Venue: Lord Ayyappa Temple, Sabari Hills, Pathanamthitta District.

One of the most famous pilgrim centres in India, the Sabarimala Temple, is located in the dense, pristine forests of the Western Ghats. The annual pilgrim season to Sabarimala begins with the Mandalakala season, which commences usually in the months of December followed by the Makaravilakku season during January. During the Mandala Pooja period the Sabarimala temple will remain open for 42 days continuously. The temple can be accessed via several routes with Pamba serving as the main halting point. Situated amid verdant forests and grasslands, the Sabarimala temple is visited by crores of devotees each year. Here, all differences including caste and creed are set aside.

Nearest railway station**:** Chengannur, about 53 KMs

Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport, about 180 KMs

3.13 Attukal Pongala

Venue: Bhagavathi Temple, Attukal, Thiruvananthapuram District.

A festival that has entered the Guinness Book of World Records for being the largest single gathering of women for a religious activity. During the Pongala festival celebrated at the Attukal Bhagavathy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, the entire city turns into a sea of devotion. Pongala literally means to boil over is a ritualistic offering of a sweet dish consisting of rice, sweet brown molasses, coconut gratings, nuts and raisins. Devotees offer pongala to appease the presiding deity of the temple - the Goddess. Only women are allowed to participate in the Pongala ritual.

Nearest railway station: Thiruvananthapuram Central, about 3 KMs

Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport, about 5 KMs

3.14 Vaikathashtami

Venue: Lord Shiva Temple, Vaikom, Kottayam District.

Vaikom Mahadeva temple, situated on the banks of the Vembanad Lake at Vaikom (Vaikkom), with its fascinating Kerala style temple architecture is a spectacle in itself. Vaikathashtami is a 12 day annual festival celebrated in December. Dance recitals, Kathakali performances, music concerts, etc. enriches the rich cultural fare for visitors of all age groups. The final day of the festival is marked by a grand procession in which the replica of the presiding deity.

Nearest railway stations: Ernakulam, about 36 KMs & Kottayam about 40

KMs
Nearest airport: Cochin international Airport, about 56 KMs.

Boat Race Festivals

3.B1 Nehru Trophy Boat Race

Venue: Punnamada Backwaters, Alappuzha District.

When August comes, the placid water of the Punnamada Lake becomes a track on fire. Yes it is the time of the prestigious Nehru Trophy Boat Race, where the silence of the lake is sliced by the slashing oars of the pacing boats. The Boar Race is held on the second Saturday of August every year.

It is the most popular of all boat races in Kerala. Magnificent snake boats compete for the trophy to commemorate the visit of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India to Alappuzha. The rhythmic and the synchronized way of rowing the majestic snake boats make it a rare spectacle. People around Punnamada Lake to enjoy this annual water festival. Apart from the races of snake boats and of smaller country crafts, there would be ceremonial water processions, spectacular floats etc.

3.B2 Aranmula Vallamkali

Venue: River Pamba, Aranmula, Pathanamthitta District.

Noted for its grandeur and long tradition, the Aranmula Uthrittathi boat race is more of a ritual than race that takes place on the auspicious day of Uthrittathi during the Onam festival. Legend is that once, the boat known as Thiruvona Thoni carrying these offerings was attacked by enemies. In order to protect the Thiruvona Thoni people from neighbouring areas sent their snake boats. Later on, this practice evolved into an offering to Lord Parthasarathy in the form of a snake boat race, held on the Uthrittathi day which eventually became popular as the Aranmula Boat Race.

3.B3 Rajiv Gandhi Boat Race

Venue: Pulinkunnu, Alappuzha District.

The festival highlights are colourful water procession, floats and boat races.
Nearest railway station: Kayamkulam, about 5 KMs away.
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 85 KMs from Alappuzha.

3.B4 Champakkulam Boat Race

Venue: Champakkulam, Alappuzha District.

Boat races of Kerala are the largest team sport in the World. It imparts experience of team spirit which cannot be expressed with words. In Kerala, the season of boat races starts with the renowned Champakkulam Moolam Boat Race. This festival takes place at Champakkulam, a serene village in Alappuzha in the month of June / July.

On the day of the race, people, both locals and travellers from far off places, flock the river bank to enjoy the race. As the sun comes straight on top of all gathered, boats in various categories like the snake boat, veppu, churulan and others from nearby regions assemble at the starting point of the race. Among these boats, the snake boats with its fascinating design catch the attention of all. Being the largest sporting event in the world, snake boat race is often

considered as the ultimate test of endurance, speed, skill and teamwork.

3.B5 Payippad Boat Race

Venue: Payippad backwaters, Payippad, Alappuzha District.

This boat race commemorates the legend associated with the installation of the idol at the Subrahmanya Swamy Temple, Haripad. The legend says that the villagers once had a vision, which directed them to a whirlpool in Kayamkulam Lake where they discovered the idol of Sree Subramanya. Apart from the breathtaking race of the snake boats and other country boats the event is made more impressive by colourful water pageants.

Nearest railway station: Haripad, about 5 KMs

Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 85 km from Alappuzha.

Other Festivals

3.O1 Thiruvonam

Thiruvonam the most auspicious day during the Onam festival is celebrated throughout Kerala, which is marked by happiness, excitement and enjoyment among all sections of people. A celebration of equality, justice, prosperity and fairness, this national festival of Keralites commemorates the return of a mythical, righteous king – Mahabali. This imaginary annual visit of Mahabali to meet his subjects is celebrated with week-long festivities. Children make floral carpets (Pookkalam) that adorn their courtyards. People forget the routine lethargy and engage themselves in cleaning their households and indulge in shopping. On the Thiruvonam day feasts (Onasadya).

3.O2 Pulikali

Venue: Swaraj Round, Thrissur.

This event takes place at the Swaraj Round in Thrissur district of Kerala. Pulikali, or the fun and frolic of tigers, is an event that has become synonymous with the festival of Onam in Kerala. The tigers are not real ones but men dressed and painted as tigers. As part of their performance, groups of local men would have their bodies and faces painted to resemble tigers.

Apart from the true colours of a tiger, one would also come across other colours and patterns and even the facial features of lion.

The make-up is time-consuming and it is quite a labour to undo the make-up, which is mostly done with oil paints. The theme of the performance is playing hide-and-seek with a hunter wielding a gun.

Nearest railway station: Thrissur, 1 KM.

Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 58 km from Thrissur.

3.O3 Navarathri Festival

The festival of Navarathri, which literally means 9 nights, falls in the months of September / October, every year. These 9 days are marked by the worship of the 9 forms of Goddess. The final 3 days of Navarathri – Durgashtami, Mahanavamiand Vijayadashami are set apart for the worship of Goddess Saraswati – the goddess of wisdom and learning. Ayudha pooja (worshipping of vocational tools) is also an integral part ofNavarathri festival in which devotees worship their work tools by keeping them in the pooja (worship) room and temples. Students at this time keep their books and other study materials in the pooja room and temples for worship. In Kerala, the Vijayadashami day is also considered auspicious for initiating children into the world of letters, which is called Vidyarambham. In the ceremony, words symbolizing the name of God are written on the tongue of the child with a golden ring.

3.O4 Parumala Perunnal

Venue: Parumala Church, Pathanamthitta District.

This weeklong festival is celebrated in the month of November at Parumala Church in Pathanamthitta District of Kerala. Parumala Perunnal is an annual feast held to commemorate the death anniversary of Bishop Mar Gregorios Metropolitan, the first canonized saint of the Malankara Orthodox Church of Kerala. The mortal remains of the Bishop are interred in the church. On this

commemoration day, special prayers are offered at the church. The festival day is marked by special services and a colourful procession.

3.O5 Arthunkal Perunnal

Venue: St. Sebastian's Church, Arthunkal, Alappuzha District.

The Arthunkal Feast is a 10 day long annual feast of the St. Sebastian's church at Arthunkal. It is held in January every year and devotees throng the church during the festival days. A procession carrying the statue of St. Sebastian from the church to the beach and back is the main event of the celebrations. Another attraction of the ten-day feast here is the ceremony on the final day, when devotees crawl on their knees all the way from the nearby beach to the church.

Nearest railway station: Alappuzha, about 22 KMs

Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 85 KMs

3.O6 Vettukadu Feast

Venue: Madre-de-Deus Church, Vettukadu, Thiruvananthapuram District.

Vettukadu, a coastal suburb in Kerala’s capital city, Thiruvananthapuram, is known for its 500 year old Church. Legend has it that the region was visited by the famous missionary, St. Francis Xavier, sometimes in 1543. This is a colourful event attended by thousands of devotees. Special prayers are held on all the festival days and a ceremonial procession carrying the statue of Christ the King is held on the main day.

3.O7 Manarcad Perunnal

Venue: St. Mary's Church, Manarcad, Kottayam District.

An eventful 8 days filled with devotion would be the rightful way to define the renowned Manarcad Perunnal, the annual feast celebrated at the St. Mary's Church at Manarcad. The procession carrying the sacred golden cross is held in the last 3 days of the feast. Devotees participate in the procession, holding decorated parasols.

3.O8 Swathi Sangeetholsavam

Venue: Kuthiramalika Palace, East Fort, Thiruvananthapuram District.

This festival is celebrated in memory of Shri. Swathi Thirunal, the erstwhile Maharaja of Travancore. In January the grand pillars of the Kuthiramalika Palace in the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram resonate with the magical

compositions sung at the Swathi Sangeetholsavam, a grand musical fiesta organized every year to pay tribute to Sri. Swathi Thirunal, who has composed many brilliant pieces of music which still fascinate music lovers. Held in the Kuthiramalika Palace, adjoining the famous Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple, East Fort in Thiruvananthapuram Swathi Sangeetholsavam includes musical performances in the Hindustani and Carnatic styles.

Chapter IV
Art Forms

Performing Arts

Kathakali

Kerala owes its transnational fame to this nearly 300 years old classical dance form which combines facets of ballet, opera, masque and the pantomime. It is said to have evolved from other performing arts. Kathakali explicates ideas and stories from the Indian epics and Puranas.

Presented in the temple precincts after dusk falls, Kathakali is heralded by the beating of drums and to the accompaniment of the gong. The riches of a happy blending of colour, expressions, music, drama and dance are unparallelled in any other art form. Kadakali costume is elaborate with the face painted up. Great importance is laid on the Vesham or make-up which are of five types - Pacha, Kathi, Thadi, Kari and Minukku.

The pomp and magnificence of Kathakali is due to its huge headgear and the kanchukam the over sized jackets, and a long skirt worn over a thick padding of cushions. Pacha Vehsam or the green make-up portray noble protagonists whereas Kathi Vesham portrays villainous characters. There are three types of bearded Veshams viz., White beard for superhuman monkeys like Hanuman, Red beard meant for evil characters and Black beard for the hunter. Black Vesham is used for she-demons whereas Minukku Vesham is used for female characters.

In Kathakali, Mudra is a stylized sign language used to depict an idea, a situation or a state of being. A Kathakali actor enacts his ideas through mudras. For this the actor follows a systematic sign language. Kathakali orchestra is formed of two varieties of drums viz., maddalam and chenda; the chengila which is a bell metal gong and the ilathalam or cymbals.

Those who want to learn kathakali have to undergo rigorous training with oil massages and separate exercises for eyes, lips, cheeks, mouth and neck. Together with highly evocative facial expressions, the mudras and the music both vocal and instrumental, Kathakali unfolds stories from a bygone era in a lofty style similar to the Greek plays.

Koothu

Koothu is a socio-religious art performed in the Koothambalam or the Koothuthara of temples, either independently or as part of Kutiyattam. It is a solo narrative performance interspersed with mime and comic remarks. Chakkiar does the role of the wise jester. Through his inimitable narration of stories from the epics, the Chakkiar criticize the manners and customs of the time. No one is above the butt of his ridicule. His wit ranges from innocent mockery to veiled innuendoes. Koothu is intermittently accompanied by the instrument Mizhavu.

Nangyar Koothu is a variation of the Koothu performed by the female members of the Chakkiar community. This is a solo dance drama. Verses are sung and interpreted through mime and dance. The mudras, though the same as in Kootiyattam, are even more elaborate.

Krishnanattom

The visual effect is enhanced by varied and colourful facial make-up with larger-than-life-masks, made of light wood and cloth padding, for certain characters. The characters who do not wear masks have specific facial colours applied within the frame of a white chutti. The predominant colours used are dark green, flesh tint and deep rose. Most of the characters wear red vests. The characters of Krishna, Arjuna and Garuda wear dark blue vests. Orchestral accompaniments are Maddalam, Ilathalam and Chengila.

Kutiyattam

Kutiyattam literally means "acting together". This is the earliest classical dramatic art form of Kerala. Based on Sage Bharatha' s "Natyasastra" who lived in the second century, Kutiyattam evolved in the 9th century AD. Kutiyattam is enacted inside the temple theatre, there are two or more characters onstage at the same time, with the Chakkiars providing the male cast and the Nangiars playing the female roles. The Nangiars beat the cymbals and recite verses in Sanskrit, while in the background Nambiars play the Mizhavu, a large copper drum. The Kutiyattam performance lasts for several days ranging from 6 to 20 days. Themes are based on mythology. The Koodal Manikyam temple at Irinjalakkuda and the Vadakkumnatha temple at Thrissur are the main centres where Kutiyattam is still performed annually.

Mohiniyattam

The sinuous dance of the enchantress, this is a distinctive classical dance form of Kerala. Slow, graceful, swaying movements of the body and limbs and highly emotive eye and hand gestures are unique to this dance form. The simple, elegant gold-filigreed dress, in pure white or ivory, is akin to the traditional attire of the women of Kerala.

The origin of Mohiniyattam is rooted in Hindu mythology. Once the ocean of milk was churned by the gods and demons to extract the elixir of life and immortality. The demons made away with this divine brew.

Lord Vishnu came to the rescue of the panicky gods and assumed the female form of an amorous celestial dame Mohini. Captivating the demons with her charms, Mohini stole the elixir from them and restored it to the gods.

Thullal

Thullal is a solo performance combining the dance and recitation of stories in verse. Staged during temple festivals, the performer explicates the verses through expressive gestures. The themes are based on mythology. This satiric art form was introduced by the renowned poet Kunchan Nambiar. Humour, satire and social criticism are the hallmarks of Thullal. The makeup, though simple, is very much akin to that of Kathakali. The Thullal dancer is supported by a singer who repeats the verses and is accompanied by an orchestra of mridangam and cymbals.

There are three related forms of Thullal - Ottanthullal, Seethankanthullal and Parayanthullal - of which the first is the most popular. The three are distinguished by the costumes worn and the verses.

Margomkali

Margomkali is a ritual folk art of the Syrian Christians of Kottayam and Thrissur Districts. A dozen dancers sing and dance around a lighted wick lamp (Nilavilakku), clad in the simple traditional white dhoti and sporting a peacock feather on the turban to add a touch of colour. This is an allegorical enactment with the lamp representing Christ and the performers his disciples. The performance is usually held in two parts and begins with songs and dances narrating the life of St. Thomas, the apostle. The narration is stark without musical accompaniments.

Oppana

A dance form essential to the wedding entertainment and festivities of the Malabar Muslims. Maidens and young female relatives sing and dance around the bride, clapping their hands. The songs of Mappilappattu, are first sung by the leader and are repeated by the chorus. The themes are often teasing comments and innuendoes about the bride's anticipated nuptial bliss. Oppana is often presented as a stage item today.

Thiruvathirakali

Thiruvathirakali is a dance performed by women, in order to attain everlasting marital bliss on Thiruvathira day in the months of December / January. The dance is a celebration of marital fidelity and the female energy,

for this is what brought Kamadeva (the god of love) back to life after he was reduced to ashes by the ire of Lord Siva.

The sinuous movements executed by a group of dancers around anilavilakku, embody 'lasya' or the amorous charm and grace of the feminine. The dance follows a circular, pirouetting pattern accompanied by clapping of the hands and singing.

Ritual Arts

Kalamezhuthu

Kalam is a unique drawing also called dhulee chithram or powder drawing. The artist uses the floor as his canvas. Kalamezhuthu pattu is performed as part of the rituals to worship and propitiate gods. This ritualistic art is a common feature of temples as well as noble households. The kalams or drawings are erased at the end of the ritual to the accompaniment of musical instruments.

The coloured powders used for the kalam are prepared from Mother Nature which makes the drawing environment friendly. The pigments are extracted from plants - rice flour (white), charcoal powder (black), turmeric powder (yellow), powdered green leaves (green), and a mixture of turmeric powder and lime (red). It often takes several hours to finish a kalam drawing with appealing perfection. The figures drawn usually have expressions of anger, and other emotions. The Kalamezhuthu is a 40 day ritualistic festival beginning with the first of Scorpio in most Bhagavathy temples in Kerala.

Kavadiyattam

Kavadiyattam, a colourful ritual art, is a votive offering to Lord Subramanya. Basically of Tamil origin, Kavadiyattam is widely prevalent in the Subramanya temples all over Kerala during the festival seasons. Dressed in bright yellow, devotees performing kavadiyattam smear sacred ash all over their body. Each one carries on his shoulder an ornate Kavadi - a huge bow, richly decorated with peacock feathers, (it is believed that the peacock is the vehicle of Sree Subramanya). Kavadiyattam literally means dance carrying a kavadi. Kavadies are usually of different sizes and shapes, each with its own significance.

A Pookavadi is one decorated with brightly coloured artificial flowers, a mayilpeeli kavadi decorated using only peacock feathers and ambalakavadi, one shaped like the gopuram (tower) of a temple. A kavadi can rise up to a height of 10-18 feet. The dancers twist and spin in a row. A group of such kavadi dancers make an exotic sight.

Patayani

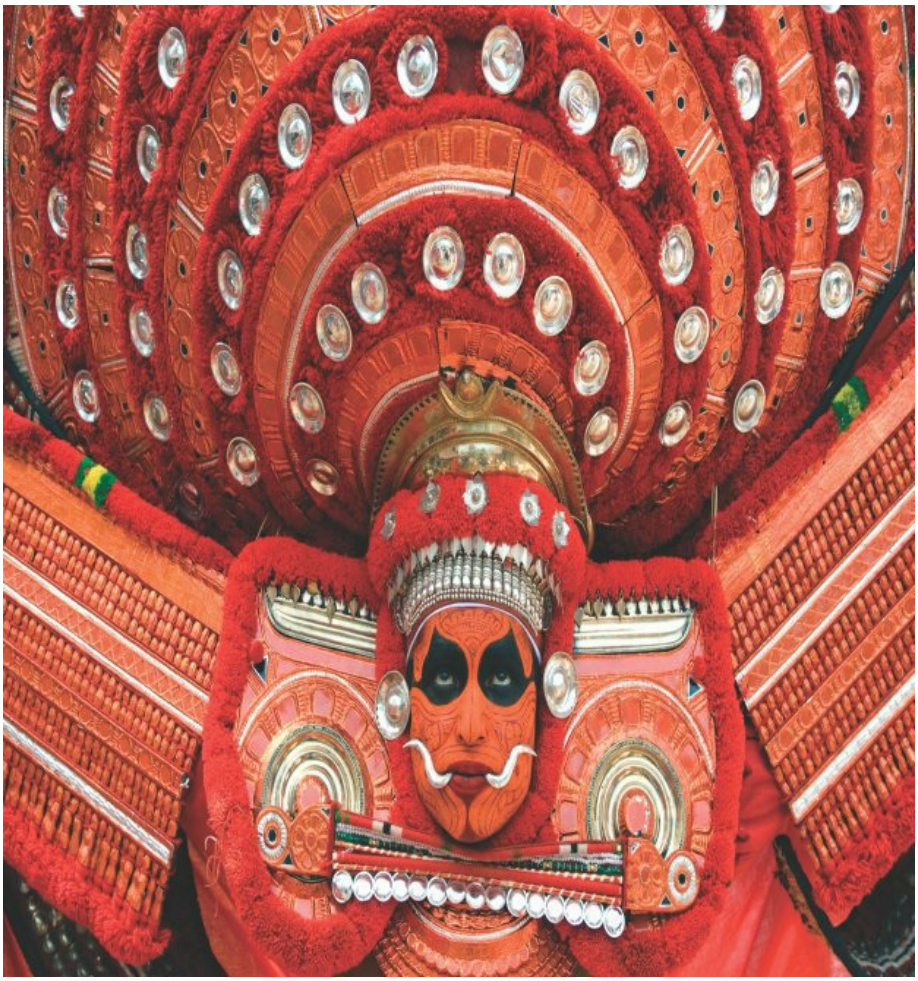
Patayani is a week-long ritual dance, held in Kaali temples on the banks of the Pamba river during the months of March / April. The choice theme of the dancers is the slaying of the demon Daarikanby the goddess Kaali. The steps and movements of the dance vary according to each character. Thappu is the major percussion instrument accompanied by a few Chendas.

Poothanumthirayum

Poothanumthirayum is a ritual offering to Goddess Kaali is performed in many places of South Malabar. Dancers dress up as Kaali (the Thira) and the accompanying spirits (the Poothams) who were created along with the goddess for the destruction of the evil demon, Daarikan. The Thira wear masks while the spirits don semi-circular wooden crowns. The dance is performed from house to house and on the premises of village shrines between November and May every year.

Theyyam

Theyyam also known as Kaliyattam is a ritual dance popular in north Kerala. Theyyam incorporates dance, mime and music and enshrines the rudiments of ancient tribal cultures which attached great importance to the worship of heroes and the spirits of ancestors. Of the over 400 Theyyams performed, the most spectacular ones are those of Raktha Chamundi, Kari Chamundi, Muchilottu Bhagavathi, Wayanadu Kulaven, Gulikan and Pottan.



The headgear and other ornamental decorations are spectacular in sheer size and appearance. Karivalloor, Nileswaram, Kurumathoor, Cherukunnu, Ezhom and Kunnathoorpadi in north Malabar are places where Theyyams are performed annually from December to April. At the Parassinikadavu Sri Muthappan Temple in Kannur, Theyyam is preformed on all days.

Tholppavakkoothu

“Leather puppet play”, is a ritual art performed during the annual festivals in the Kaali temples of Palakkad District. The theme of the play is based on the Kamba Ramayana, narrated in a diction that is a mixture of Malayalam and Tamil dialectical variations. The play covers the whole gamut of events from Lord Sree Rama's birth to his coronation as the King of Ayodhya. The puppets are fashioned out of the hides of buffaloes and deer, the former for evil characters and latter for noble ones.

Each puppet is of an average height of 80 cms and is cut out in different postures. The puppets are arranged behind a long white curtain stretched across the Koothumadom. Behind this, on a split bamboo pole, is placed a row of wick lamps burning inside coconut halves. The light from these lamps cast the silhouettes of the puppets on the curtain. The chief puppeteer is known as 'Pulavar'. At present this ritual art is confined to Ottapalam and Kavalappara in Palakkad District.

Kalaripayattu – The Martial Art of Kerala

Kalaripayattu - the martial art form of Kerala is regarded as the oldest and most scientific of its kind in the world. Training in combat is given at the Kalari (training school). The principles of Kalari education stipulate that training in martial art begins with an oil massage of the body which goes on until the body is agile. Feats like jumping, running, somersault etc. are then taught, followed by the lessons in the use of weapons such as swords, spears, bows and arrows etc.
Kalaripayattu training aims at the ultimate co-ordination of the mind and body. The traditional training in a kalari includes specialisation in indigenous medical practice too. Kalaris are also centers of religious worship.

The practice of Kalaripayattu is said to originate from the Dhanur Vedic texts encompassing all fighting arts and described by the Vishnu Purana as one of the eighteen traditional branches of knowledge. Kalaris are the schools where training in this martial art form is imparted by Gurukals or masters. Kalaripayattu is a traditional psycho-physiological discipline emanating from Kerala's unique mytho-historical heritage as well as a scientific system of physical culture training. The historical antecedents of this martial art form combines indigenous Dravidian systems of martial practice such as 'varma ati' or 'marma adi' with an influence of Aryan brahman culture which migrated southwards down the west coast of India into Kerala. There are two distinct traditions in Kalaripayattu-the Northern and the Southern schools.

In the Northern tradition the emphasis is laid on progressing from body exercises to combat with weapons and last of all to unarmed combat. In the Southern tradition the patron saint of Kalaripayattu is the sage Agastya whose

strength and and powers of meditation are legendary. It is said that when the Lord Shiva married the Goddess Parvati at Kailasa in the North, all gods and goddesses went to attend the wedding and with this shift in weight the world tilted, so much so, that Agastya was sent to the South to restore the balance. Lord Rama, legend has it, was mentored by Agastya to acquire the weapons, which defeated the demon king Ravana. In the southern tradition the emphasis is primarily on footwork, movement and the ability to strike at vital points or 'marmas' in the opponents body of which 108 points are considered lethally vulnerable.

Chapter V
Museums

Napier Museum, Thiruvananthapuram

It is an Art and Natural History Museum, in Trivandrum established in 1880. Napier Museum and Natural History Museum are situated in the Museum compound, right in the heart of the Thiruvananthapuram city.

Napier Museum built in the 19th century; this Indo-Saracenic structure boasts a natural air-conditioning system and houses a rare collection of archaeological and historic artefacts, bronze idols, ancient ornaments, a temple chariot and ivory carvings. A visit to the Napier Museum complex reveals a glimpse of Kerala's rich cultural heritage. An exceptional piece of architecture, the Museum is named after the former Madras Governor General, John Napier. The Napier Museum is also called the Government Art Museum. The Museum building is a combination of the Kerala, Mughal, Chinese and Italian architectural styles.

The building is a masterpiece that attracts students of architecture. There are bronze idols, ivory carvings, ancient ornaments and Kerala artifacts displayed. Sri Chitra Art gallery is a place for Art lovers; it holds portraits of royal family members of different kingdoms of India. There are samples of Rajput, Tanjore and Mughal art forms. Apart from the museum, a large zoological garden covering 55 acres forms part of the grounds. Museum is open from 10 am to 4.45 pm on all days except Mondays and forenoon of Wednesdays.

Nearest railway station: Thiruvananthapuram Central, about 2 KMs
Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport, about 6 KMs
Location - Lattitude: 8.508907, Longitude: 76.95515

Sree Chithra Enclave, Thiruvananthapuram

Opened in 1993, this museum depicts the history of the Travancore Royal Family and displays their personal belongings and artefacts. Old newspaper footage and deeds describing events are also exhibited. Sree Chithra Enclave is located inside the Museum Complex in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

Nearest railway station: Thiruvananthapuram Central, about 3 KMs away
Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport, about 5 KMs away
Location - Lattitude:8.516684, Longitude: 76.95508

Tea Museum, Munnar

Munnar is perhaps the choicest of places to preserve and showcase some of the exquisite and interesting aspects on the genesis and growth of tea plantations in Kerala's high ranges. With special emphasis to Munnar, and to the delight of tea lovers and tourists, Tata Tea opened a Tea Museum which houses curious, photographs and machineries, each depicting a turning point that contributed to a flourishing tea industry, as seen today in the region.

The museum set up at the Nallathanni Estate of Tata Tea in Munnar is a fitting tribute to the toils and rigours of its pioneers, who showed utmost determination and were resolute in their efforts to transform Munnar into a major plantation centre of Kerala. The Tata Tea Museum diligently portrays the growth of Munnar tea estates, veritably conveyed through some of the

displays like the rudimentary tea roller to the modern fully automated tea factory.

Some of the attention grabbing items on display at the Tea museum include the original tea roller, the 'Rotorvane,' dating back to 1905, used for tea processing; the 'Pelton Wheel' used in the power generation plant that existed in the Kanniamallay estate in the 1920s; a rail engine wheel of the Kundale Valley Light Railway that shuttled men and material between Munnar and Top Station during the first half of the last century. A section of the Tea museum also houses classic bungalow furniture, typewriters, wooden bathtub, magneto phone, iron oven etc.

A demonstration room for tea tasting is another attraction where one would come across different varieties of tea. The museum is closed on Monday.

Nearest railway station: Aluva, about 112 KMs.
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport , about 72 KMs away
Location - Lattitude:10.095544, Longitude: 77.050717

Vaidyaratnam Ayurveda Museum, Thrissur

With an antiquity of about 5000 years, Ayurveda remains nature’s best remedy for a wide range of health problems. Kerala’s traditional wisdom in healthcare to a great extent is based on the principles of Ayurveda.

Making a strong come back in the modern era, Ayurveda has more takers than ever before. Talking about Ayurveda, in Kerala, visitors can check out a museum established and maintained by one of the leading names in Ayurveda – the Ashtavaidyan Thaikkattu Mooss. The Vaidyaratnam Ayurveda Museum is situated at Thaikkattussery, near Ollur in Thrissur District of Kerala, India. Here, visitors would come across the richness, the variety and the evolution of Ayurveda in India. The museum is also a memorial of the Centenary celebrations of the founder of Vaidyaratnam, Sri. E. T. Neelakandan Mooss, who himself is a living legend of Ayurveda in India.

The museum has a Kerala traditional Nalukettu, Saraswathi Mandapam, Smruthi Mandapam and a modern theatre at an elevated 2 Acres ground near Vaidyaratnam corporate office. The main Museum has separate galleries of diorama presentations about the history of Ayurveda from mythological, Vedic, Sahitha, Sangraha, Medieval period to Kerala Ayurveda tradition in separate room with footnotes. Kayachikitsa (general medicine), Balachikitsa (paediatrics), Graha Chikitsa (psychiatry), Oordhvanga Chikitsa (ophthalmology and otorhinolaryngiology), Salya Chikitsa (surgery), Damshtra Chikitsa (clinical toxicology), Jara Chikitsa (rejuvenation therapy) and Vrusha Chikitsa (reproductive medicine) – the various branches of Ayurveda are displayed in exhaustive detail. There are exhibits manifesting the facts and myths associated with the history and evolution of Ayurveda. The various modalities observed during the yesteryears of Ayurveda and the contemporary period spring to life here.

Nearest railway station: Thrissur, about 8 KMs.
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 43 KMs
Location - Lattitude: 10.464222, Longitude: 76.241673

Archaeological Museum, Thrissur

The Archaeological Museum is functioning in the Shakthan Thampuran Palace, a landmark in the annals of the Perumpadappu Swaroopam, the former ruling dynasty of Kochi. The majestic building houses a gallery of murals from all over Kerala and preserves a rare treasure of herostones, temple models, manuscripts on dry palm leaves, megaliths etc. Herostones are stone engravings and sculptures of figures and weapons belonging to the heroes of days gone by. Most of these were recovered from the forests of Wayanad and Thrissur. The megalith collection includes earthen pots, urns etc.

Nearest railway station: Thrissur, about 3 KMs away
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 57 KMs away
Location - Lattitude: 10.530893, Longitude: 76.223334

Art Museum, Thrissur

Art museum situated at Thirssur displays collections of wood carvings, metal sculptures, ancient jewellery, stone figurines etc. A sample of umbrella stone can also be seen in the museum. The kodakallu was a secondary burial site.

Nearest railway station: Thrissur, about 4 KMs.

Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 52 KMs.

Chacha Nehru Children's Museum, Thiruvananthapuram

Children of all age groups will enjoy the vast collection of nearly 2000 dolls, stamps and masks displayed here.

Nearest railway station: Thiruvananthapuram (2 KMs.)
Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport, about 10 KMs.
Location – Lattitude: 8.491813, Longitude: 76.959643

Hill Palace Museum, Thripunithura

The Hill Palace, Kerala's first heritage museum noted for royal collections of the erstwhile Maharaja of Kochi, is today the largest archaeological museum in Kerala. Built in 1865, the palace complex consists of 49 buildings in the trational architectural style of Kerala, sprawled over 52 acres of beautifully landscaped terraced land which houses a deer park and facilities for horse riding. Numerous species of flora including rare medicinal plants grow here.

On display in the full-fledged Ethno-archaeological museum are oil-paintings, murals, sculptures in stone and manuscripts, inscriptions, coins, belongings of the Kochi royal family and royal furniture including the simhasana (throne). Also exhibited are about 200 antique pieces of pottery and ceramic vases, wooden temple models etc.

Hill Palace in Trippunithura, a suburb of Kochi is an archaeological Museum. It used to be the administrative complex of Rajas of Kochi; a vast area of 54 acres housing 49 buildings, built during later 19th century.

The Palace was taken over by the Department of Archaeology in 1980. It comprises an archaeological museum, a heritage museum, and parks for deer, and pre-historic objects. Rare species of medicinal plants are grown in the campus.

There are old paintings, sculptures in stone and marble, coins of the day, weapons; all these depicting the manner of life of that age. The gold crown encrusted with precious stones, and the ornaments worn by the women of the palace, hold our attention. The large pond which was used only by the royal family stays serene as a witness to past events.

Nearest railway station: Ernakulam, about 10 KMs
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 33 KMs
Location - Lattitude:9.953634, Longitude: 76.361446

Thunchan Memorial at Tirur, Malappuram

This is the birth place of Thunchath Ezhuthachan, the father of the Malayalam language. On Vijayadasami Day, many come here for vidyarambham, the ceremony in which children are initiated into learning. The iron stylus with which Ezhuthachan wrote his texts on palm leaves and the ancient kanjira tree under which he composed his poems are treasured exhibits here.

Nearest railway station: Tirur, about 2 KMs.

Nearest airport: Calicut International Airport, about 26 km

Location - Lattitude: 10.908451, Longitude: 75.916189

Kerala Folklore and Culture Museum

This museum combines Kerala architecture and traditional performing arts of South India. The setting up of this museum is a national achievement. It took an effort of 62 special-skilled carpenters for 7 years to build it. There are unique window frames, hand - painted ceilings, folk art puppets, garments worn by the dancers, the typical musical instruments used by them, samples of architecture etc. Guests can find out in advance the time and days of the performances which are mainly Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, Bharatanatyam and Kalaripayattu with live music.

Science and Technology Museum

This museum in the State Capital houses galleries with working or animated and participatory models on different disciplines of Science and Electronics. Technology attracts all irrespective of age. There are science related shows explained in English daily at noon in the Planetarium. The high point of the complex is the Observatory at an altitude of 60 m gives you a bird’s view of the city. Priyadarshini Planetarium is a part of Science and technology museum, Trivandrum.

The Museum has ten galleries exhibiting more than 300 items. Each gallery contains items related a particular disciple of science or engineering. There are galleries for electrical, electronics, mechanical, automobile and bio-medical engineering. There is a special gallery for popular science, and also for solar energy. Mathematics, computer science and space science are the other disciplines having galleries of their own. Apart from the Planetarium, the Museum offers facilities for night sky observation with a fully automatic 11 inch telescope. The Museum operates two Mobile Science Exhibition Units on astronomy and science and a separate mobile astronomy unit named Astrovan. The Museum also conducts creative science workshops for school children during every summer.

Koyikkal Palace

Koyikkal Palace is situated in Nedumangadu,Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala in South India. This palace was built in sixteenth century for Umayamma Rani of the Venad Royal Family.

This palace is a double storeyed building and built with traditional architectural style of Kerala. This palace is maintained by the Archaeological Department of Kerala. Exhibits in the museum contains rare instruments.

Kerala Soil Museum, Parottukonam, Thiruvananthapuram.

Kerala Soil Museum is a museum on the premises of Central Soil Analytical Laboratory at Parottukonam, Thiruvananthapuram District of Kerala. This museum displays the diverse types of soil in the state. It was set up by the Department of Soil Survey and Conservation of Government of Kerala and inaugurated on 1 January 2014. It has been described as the world's largest soil museum. Kerala State Government established the soil museum to provide an exhibition of the richness of Kerala's soils and mineral resources, as well as to foster public awareness about conservation and ecological protection.

Most important exhibits in the museum are a set of 82 soil monoliths 1.5 metres tall which preserve and display the intact soil profiles of all of the

82 soil series recognised in the state of Kerala. Each monolith was dug from the ground without disturbing its elements and was processed for one month or longer before being mounted for museum display. Alongside each monolith is information about the soil, including the physical characteristics of the soil series, where it is found, its nutrient status, the crops it is best suited for etc.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Police Museum, Kollam.

This museum traces the history and growth of the police force in India. It is located just opposite the Kollam Railway Station. The museum is dedicated to barrister and statesman Vallabhbhai Patel.

Inaugurated in 2000, in addition to arms and ammunition of the 18th & 19th centuries, including bullets, guns, machines, and a diversity of other weapons, the museum also houses information charts on DNA tests, human bones, fingerprints, snaps of police dogs and a variety of medals awarded to policemen of different ranks.

Indo-Portuguese Museum, Fort Kochi.

This museum was emerged largely as a result of efforts of the late Dr. Joseph Kureethra, Bishop of Kochi, in a bid to protect and showcase the rich cultural heritage and Portuguese influence.

This museum now showcases the Portuguese influences on Fort Kochi and the surrounding areas. This museum has five main sections: Altar, Treasure, Procession, Civil Life and Cathedral. Among the pieces on display are a piece of the altar made in teak (16th century) from the Church of Our Lady of Hope, Vypeen. The museum is located inside the compound of the Bishop's House at Fort Kochi.

Mattancherry Palace

This Palace was built and gifted by the Portuguese as a present to the Raja of Cochin in 1555. The Dutch carried out some extensions and renovations in the palace in 1663, and thereafter it was popularly called Dutch Palace. The rajas also made more improvements to it. Today, it is a portrait gallery of the Cochin Rajas and notable for some of the best mythological murals in India, which are in the best traditions of Hindu temple art. The landing of Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese explorer at Kappad in 1498 was welcomed by the Kochi rulers. The influence of the Portuguese were supplanted by the Dutch and they took over Mattancherry in 1663. Subsequently, the area was taken over by Hyder Ali and still later by the British East India Company.

Portraits of the Rajas of Cochin, from 1864 onwards, are displayed in what was once the Coronation Hall. These were painted by local artists in western style. The ceiling of the hall is decorated with floral designs in wood craft. Amongst the other exhibits in the palace are an ivory palanquin, a howdah, royal umbrellas, ceremonial dress used by the royalty, coins, stamps and drawings. In 1951, Mattancherry Palace was restored and declared a centrally protected monument. The palace is already undergoing a second restoration by the Archaeological Survey of India. The restoration will raise the historical structure to a building and a museum of an international standard, preserving its originality. This palace is an architectural masterpiece showcasing the blend between colonial and Kerala architecture.

Chapter VI
Backwaters

Kerala popularly known as God's Own Country is visited by millions of tourists to spend a memorable holiday amidst serene and scenic natural ambiances. Secluded beaches, palm fringed backwaters, exotic wildlife, cuisine, fairs and festivals make Kerala the most beautiful tourist destination of India. Among all these attractions Kerala Houseboats and Kerala Backwaters are two most popular enchanters of Kerala Tour.

Have you ever gone cruising in a houseboat on the backwaters of Kerala? If

you haven't, make sure you do. This one is really a wonderful and unforgettable experience. Present day houseboats are huge, slow moving exotic barges used for leisure trips, and are in fact reworked version of kettuvallams of olden times. The original kettuvallams were used to carry tons of rice and spices. A standard kettuvallam can hold up to 30 tons. The kettuvallam is held together with coir knots. Not even a single nail is used during the construction of the boat. The boat is made of planks of jack-wood joined together with coir. This is then coated with a caustic black resin made from boiled cashew kernels. With careful maintenance, a kettuvallam can last for generations. A portion of the kettuvallam is covered with bamboo and coir to serve as a restroom and kitchen for the crew. Meals would be cooked onboard and supplemented with freshly cooked fish from the backwaters.

While converting kettuvallams into houseboats, care is taken to use only natural products. Bamboo mats, sticks and wood of the areca nut tree are used for roofing, coir mats and wooden planks for the flooring and wood of coconut trees and coir for beds. For lighting though, solar panels are used. Today, the houseboats have all the creature comforts of a good hotel including furnished bedrooms, modern toilets, cozy living rooms, a kitchen and even a balcony for angling. Parts of the curved roof of wood or plaited palm open out to provide shade and allow uninterrupted views. While most boats are poled by local oarsmen, some are powered by a engines. Boat-trains - formed by joining two or more houseboats together are also used for sightseeing. What is truly magical about a houseboat ride is the breathtaking view of the untouched rural Kerala. Hiring a traditional thatched Kerala houseboat and exploring the backwaters is a quintessential Kerala experience.

Majority of houseboats are hired from Alleppey, the gateway to the backwaters. Alleppey is in between Kochi and Kollam. Most houseboat operators, and around 600 houseboats, are based there. From Alleppey, you'll be taken on an adventure through the various backwaters to places such as Kumarakom, Kottayam, etc. There's a wide range of destinations to choose from to suit all travel plans. Houseboats will usually travel a distance of around 40-50 kilometers (25-30 miles) through the backwaters each day, so you'll get to see lots of different scenery. Many resorts and luxury hotels have their own houseboats as well. They offer sunset cruises and overnight trips. Other hotels will be able to readily arrange a houseboat for you. That way, you can combine staying in a hotel along the backwaters with a houseboat

ride.

You can hire a houseboat for as little as a day, or as long as a week, it depends.
Day trips run from around midday until 6 p.m. Most people go for overnight hire, which includes a serene sleep out in the middle of nowhere, in a lake or other similarly peaceful spot. The houseboats then return by 9 a.m. or 10 a.m. the next day. 48 hours on a houseboat is definitely long enough to take in all the sights and re-charge your batteries.

Best Route to Take

Most people depart from Alleppey and do a round trip though the core backwater area. However, it's also possible to do one way trips, such as from Alleppey to Kottayam (useful if you're proceeding on to Munnar or Periyar in Thekkady), and Alleppery to Kochi. Some of the popular destinations include:

- Alleppey - Kuttanad - renowned for its paddy fields, it has an extensive network of narrow backwaters and is an excellent destination for experiencing village life. Intriguingly, farming is done below sea leave in this area.
- Alleppey - Kumarakom - many luxury resorts are located on the banks of Vembanad Lake in this area. It's also renowned for the Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary.
- Alleppey - Alumkadavu - located near Kollam, this is a particularly long cruise and is either a one way day trip or overnight return.

Cost of houseboat hire greatly depends on the quality of the boat and the time of year. Prices triple from late December to early January. The minimum rate for overnight hire is around $100 without air conditioning. Most people pay around $160 upwards to hire a deluxe air conditioned houseboat for two. Rates easily go up to $300 or more for a luxury houseboat. Large family sized houseboats, with multiple bedrooms and living rooms are also available for hire. This rate include freshly cooked food, made by an on-board cook, and drinks. Do check to make sure you'll have the houseboat to yourselves if this is a concern, because many houseboats have more than one bedroom. One other thing to keep in mind is that some houseboats have an upper deck lounge area, where you can relax and enjoy the view. This is desirable as it gives you privacy away from the staff.

Peak season is months of December and January. When the weather is cooler and dry, but it's possible to hire a houseboat all year round. Some people find that the monsoon season has special appeal and choose to combine their houseboat hire with an Ayurvedic treatment. Attractive monsoon discounts are offered as well. March to May gets very hot and humid, so if you hire a houseboat during this time, an air conditioned one is definitely recommended.

There are so many houseboats for hire at Alleppey that it's not necessary to book in advance, apart from during the peak season. Instead head down to the jetty in the early morning (before 9 a.m.), inspect the boats there, and

negotiate the best price. Then go back to your hotel, pack your belongings, and when you return to the boat it will be ready to depart. During peak season, the availability of quality boats drops dramatically and prices get hiked. As prices aren't properly regulated, they can fluctuate widely.

About backwaters

Alappuzha - Canal Cruise

While cruising through alappuzha canals, one would come across the many interesting aspects of day-to-day life on land and water.

A wide range of cruise options are available here - from small country boats to luxury houseboats and small speedboats to big passenger motorboats. Small boats are preferred for cruise through the canals. The canal networks linked to the *Vembanad Lake* offer an inspiring and interesting experience. You would also come across small islands, locals engaged in fishing activities on country boats, children being ferried to schools and *kettuvallams*, the majestic rice barges, gliding over the canals.

Another interesting sight is that of large flocks of ducks being shepherded to newly-harvested paddy fields. You could also drop in at villages on the banks

to check out the techniques and procedures of coir making. It's also a chance to try out the ethnic cuisine from local eateries. If you are in Kerala, don't miss a cruise through the canals of Alappuzha.
Nearest railway station: Alappuzha
Nearest airport: Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 85 KMs

Backwater stretches of Ashtamudi

Ashtamudi Lake has 8 arms or channels and is the gateway to the backwaters. This 16 KMs long lake is the second largest in Kerala. Trip between Kollam and Alappuzha is one of the most popular and longest backwater cruises in Kerala. The 8 hour journey will give you an intimate experience of the famed waterways.
Nearest railway station: Kollam Junction
Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport, about 70 KMs
Location - Lattitude:8.95138, Longitude: 76.582575

Chandragiri Fort & River

Situated near the confluence of the Payaswini River and the Arabian Sea, the Chandragiri Village is known for its large fort. The Chandragiri Fort, one among a chain of forts built by the same ruler, perched atop a hill is in ruins now. But the location offers a breathtaking view of the convergence of the river and the Arabian Sea. The place is a vantage point to watch the sunset. Chandragiri is situated 4 km from Bekal.
Chandragiri Cruises: Boat trips to nearby islands and palm groves.
Chandragiri Boat Club: The Boat Club offers speed boat rides, houseboat cruises, island camping and wildlife tours in the hinterlands. Fishermen near the Chandragiri Bridge will give you a ride on the backwaters and arrange trips to nearby islands.
Nearest railway station: Kasaragod, about 7 KMs
Nearest airport: Mangalore Airport (Karnataka) about 67 KMs
Location - Lattitude:12.469012, Longitude: 75.003734

Kumarakom

The village of Kumarakom is a cluster of little islands on the Vembanad Lake, and is part of the Kuttanad region. Bird sanctuary here spread across 14 acres is a favourite haunt of migratory birds and an ornithologist's paradise.

Egrets, darters, herons, teals, waterfowls, cuckoo, wild duck and migratory birds like the Siberian Stork visit here in flocks and are a fascinate the visitors. An enchanting backwater destination, Kumarakom offers visitors many other leisure options.

Nearest railway station: Kottayam, about 13 KMs

Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 94 KMs

Location - Lattitude:9.617119, Longitude: 76.429482

Kuttanad - the rice bowl of Kerala

It is the major rice granary of Kerala, where vast stretches of verdant paddy fields are interlaced with enchanting backwaters create some of the

unforgettable sights. Noted for its farming below sea level (about 4 to 10 feet) the land of Kuttanad possesses a socio-cultural fabric of its own. Four major rivers in Kerala viz. Pampa, Meenachil, Achankovil and Manimala flow into the region.

During the harvest season the vast expanse of paddy fields, at some places dotted with islets of coconut trees, will be busy with farmers engrossed in different farming activities. Quite early in the morning itself one can sight the women folk heading towards the paddy fields and on the other hand men could be seen already on the fields till the land, sowing the seeds, getting rid of weeds, diverting water channels etc.

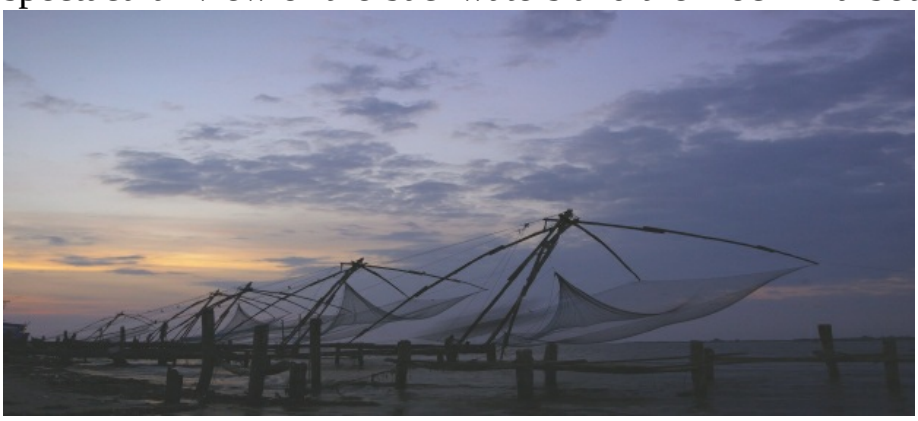
You would also come across big country boats called *Kettu Vallams* on which goods like coconut husk, rice grains etc. are transported to nearby markets in bulk. Among the sights on the backwaters here at *Kuttanad*, the most fascinating obviously is that of the ducks, quacking together in high decibels and moving across the backwaters in large numbers; shepherded by men on small boats. One can also catch men playing on the backwater; some diving down to collect lime shells from the depths and others fishing with their nets and traditional cane basket.

For those interested in trying out few local dishes may do so by dropping at the small traditionally built wayside eateries, which are quite famous for backwater fish delicacies and tapioca. A popular naturally extracted beverage is the toddy, which is available in plenty and enjoyed by many.

Nearest railway station: Alappuzha
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 85 KMs from Alappuzha
Location - Lattitude:9.355408, Longitude: 76.404047
Altitude: 2 m Below sea level

Marine Drive - A popular hangout in Kochi

Marine Drive in Kochi, is a popular hangout and this scenic stretch offers a spectacular view of the backwaters and the Kochi Harbour.



The Rainbow Bridge and the International Tourism Boat Jetty Complex are other attractions here.

Nearest railway station: Ernakulam, about 3 KMs
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 29 KMs
Location - Lattitude:9.982629, Longitude: 76.275537

Pathiramanal

Pathiramanal is a small island on the backwaters of Alappuzha. It is a haven for hundreds of rare birds migrating from different parts of the world. You can reach there after 1 1/2 hours drive by motor boat or 30 minutes by speed boat from Alappuzha. Surrounded by the Vembanad Lake, stretching from Alappuzha to Kochi and the Kayamkulam lake, Pathiramanal is accessible only by boat.

Nearest railway station: Alappuzha, about 16 KMs
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 85 KMs
Location - Lattitude:9.618691, Longitude: 76.384885

Placid backwater stretch of Ashtamudi, Kollam

Tag with District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC) of Kollam and allow them to be your guide, as you glide over the placid backwater stretch of Ashtamudi in Kollam.

If one opts for the 'Round-the-trip Cruise' this full day cruise will cover all islands in the Ashtamudi backwater and the 'See & Sleep Cruise' option offers day cruise with overnight stay on the backwater. The third option 'Star Night Cruise' will take one for a fascinating sunset cruise and a night's stay

on the backwater.
Location - Lattitude:8.967658, Longitude: 76.57073

Valapattanam, Kannur
Kannur is that part of the legendary Malabar Coast where King Solomon's ships anchored to collect timber to build the 'Temple of the Lord' and to secure most needed spices. The timber industry of Valapattanam thrive on the rich forest resources of the district. Teak, *Iruli*, *Elavu*, *Karimurukku*, sandalwood (Sandalum album) etc. are found in plenty in the forests here. In addition are cash crops like tea, coffee, rubber, tobacco, cashew nuts etc. Valapattanam is also a famous fishing harbour as well as the main source of the irrigation project in the district.
Nearest railway station: Kannur, about 7 KMs
Nearest airport: Calicut International Airport, about 93 KMs from Kannur town
Location - Lattitude:11.925596, Longitude: 75.350111

Willingdon Island, Kochi
Named after Lord Willingdon, a former British Viceroy of India, this man-made island is surrounded by beautiful backwaters. The island is the site of the city's best hotels and trading centres, the Port Trust and the headquarters of the southern naval command.
Nearest railway station: Ernakulam South, about 3 KMs
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 26 KMs
Location - Lattitude:9.951267, Longitude: 76.275194

Alappuzha - Kochi cruise
Feel free and relaxed as your eyes, first lazily and then passionately enjoy the bewitching Vembanad Lake, the largest backwater stretch in Kerala. Let us steer towards Kumarakom, one of the prime tourist attractions of Kerala. En route, Vembanad Lake offers you sights of backwater village life and a lot of backwater activities. The green shores throbbing with vigour and pure beauty will never tire you. The soft sunlight lends the calm water a new enchantment as the palms on both shores welcome you with a gentle whisper in the wind. Once you enter Q S T and R Block Kayal, it is an added enchantment. It is situated at Kuttanad, popularly known as the rice bowl of Kerala. On reaching Kumarakom, you enter another world of wonders. This small backwater village, which is a cluster of islands, has a life of its own, with a

slow, serene rhythm. The sights, sounds and fragrances will simply captivate you. After staying back at Kumarakom for a bit and relaxing, you may proceed to Vaikom.

It is time again to enjoy the placidity of the Vembanad Lake, in all its splendor. On the way, you will find a small island, Pathiramanal, seemingly afloat in the middle of the backwater. On resuming your journey, the next halt point for you is Thanneermukkom, a village known for its Salt Water Barrier, popularly known as Thanneermukkom Bund. It is the largest mud regulator in India.

Your next backwater destination - Vaikom offers you many interesting sights and lifestyles. You may find here the specimens of Kerala's grand tradition. A famous temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is the prime attraction of this town.

From Vaikom you may proceed to Kumbalangi.

Once through the breezy backwaters of Kumbalangi, it is time for us to proceed to Fort Kochi, known for its share of Chinese fishing nets and many historic sites. Bidding adieu to Fort Kochi, let us steer towards the Bolghatty Island, our final destination. En route to the Bolghatty Island, you would pass by the panoramic view of the mainland of Ernakulam city, its skyline and the shipyard on the eastern side. Once in Bolghatty, it is time for us to unwind. Loosen yourself to the soothing cool breeze and the reassuring touch of serene sunlight.

Nearest railway station: Alappuzha

Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 85 KMs from Alappuzha

CHAPTER VII
BEACH LIFE

Kerala is not a new name to the sun-worshippers, the 550 KMs coastal line overlooking the majestic Arabian Sea is the catch of this stunning southern state of India. Studded with some impeccable beaches that are often marked with swaying palms, quaint lighthouses and multi-hued seashells, Kerala is a true paradise for nature lovers.

From a measly 29,000 overseas tourists visiting Kerala in 1979, the number rose to 225,000 in 2000 and the number of tourists is growing rapidly. Foreign tourist arrivals in Kerala in 2006 were 428,534, an increase of 23.68% over the previous year. Domestic tourist arrivals were 6,271,724, an increase of 5.47% over the previous year. The ABC of Kerala tourism is Ayurveda, Beaches, Canals (backwaters). Lying between north latitudes 8°18' and 12°48' Kerala is well within the humid equatorial tropics. The mean annual temperatures range from 25.0–27.5 °C in the coastal lowlands. With 120–140 rainy days per year, Kerala is influenced by the seasonal heavy rains of the southwest summer monsoon.

Kerala beaches are amongst the best in India and are an excellent alternative to Goa. Some of the beaches remain relatively deserted. Yet, in case you don't want to relax, you'll find plenty going on at others. This Kerala beach guide will point you in the right direction of the most suitable beach for you. The best time to visit, weather wise, is from December to March. However, you'll get some fantastic off season discounts during the monsoon.

With 580 kilometers of coastline in Kerala, finding the best beach escape is no small task. Kerala in fact is well known all over the world for backwaters, beaches and coconut trees but Kerala is not short of great beaches as well. Secluded beaches, laid back beaches, white sand beaches or party beaches: there’s any type of beach for everybody in Kerala. There are beaches for couples in Kerala where you can wrap up each other in Love, the beaches suitable for archetypal vacation for couples: the beach getaway. Nothing says romance like warm weather, hammocks strung between palm trees and cocktails with umbrellas in them that occupies the beaches in Kerala will make your holidays more enjoyable.

With over 2.5 million tourists descending on the Gods Own Country in a year, it’s becoming increasingly difficult to find the best beach. Kerala is not short of beaches. Kerala in fact is well known all over the world for its beaches and vast coconut groves. Pristine beaches at secluded locations, laid back beaches where you can enjoy sunset reading a book in a hammock or party beaches where you can party all night in a shack. There are beaches for couples in Kerala where you can wrap up each other in love, the beaches suitable for archetypal vacation for couples: the beach getaway. Nothing says romance like warm weather, hammocks strung between palm trees and cocktails with umbrellas in them. Airy villas, starry nights and private plunge pools will make your holidays more enjoyable.

Kerala gives us the realization that finding gorgeous beaches and tropical landscapes where you can truly be alone. There are three types of accommodation near beaches in Kerala: family-run inns, large resorts and historic cottages facing beaches. For entertainment outside the pace you are staying consider getting a genuine Ayurveda treatment in one of the spas, enjoying some spicy fish pollichathu in one of the beach side shacks, or surfing in the calm waters in some of the beaches like Varkala. Most of the popular Kerala beaches have open-air beachfront restaurants, which serves a mix of food in Kerala, plus an ever-changing menu of fresh local fish. For something more intimate, book a table at one of the high end resorts.

MUST VISIT BEACHES

A1 Kovalam – For Action

If you want action, you'll definitely find it at Kovalam beach - the most popular and most developed beach in Kerala. Often likened to Goa's Calangute and Bagabeaches, Kovalam is located not far from the capital, Trivandrum. It's actually made up of two main coves -- Hawa (also referred to as Eve's beach) and Lighthouse. Lighthouse is the biggest and busiest of the two, with its promenade lined with open air restaurants. Kovalam is a popular surfing destination in India. If you'd prefer somewhere a little more secluded, you'll find nearby Samudra beach to be a better option. Kovalam is an internationally renowned beach with three adjacent crescent beaches. It has been a favourite haunt of tourists, especially Europeans, 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 facility for tourists at Kovalam ranges from five star hotels to budget hotels and the choice of food is available at restaurants and cafeteria ranges from Continental varieties to South Indian tastes.

Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, is just 16 km away from Kovalam and getting there is no hassle. But if you are on holiday it is better to stay in Kovalam and visit the city. The City of Thiruvananthapuram has interesting places to see like the Napier Museum, the Shri Chitra Art Gallery, the Padmanabhaswamy Temple, Ponmudi hill station etc.

The long coastline of Kerala is inextricably entwined with the culture, life and traditions of the state. Memories of early seafarers and traders have faded, but boats of various types and styles have survived. Kerala's beaches, or Kovalam to be more specific, were rediscovered by back-packers and tan-seekers in the sixties. Hordes of hippies followed in the seventies. That started the transformation of the casual fishing village into a busy tourist destination.

Nearest railway station: Thiruvananthapuram Central, about 16 km
Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport, about 10 km
Location - Lattitude:8.402074, Longitude: 76.978426
Altitude - Sea level
Best time to visit - September to March

A2 Bekal Beach - For Luxury and History

Kasaragod, the Northern most district of Kerala is renowned as the land of

gods, forts, rivers, hills and beautiful beaches. The imposing fort at Bekal is one of the largest and best preserved forts in Kerala. The beautiful expanse of the shallow beach near the Bekal fort known as Bekal Fort Beach has been developed as an exotic beach location by the Bekal Resorts Development Corporation (BRDC). Bekal is located 16 kms south of Kasaragod town on the National Highway and is known for its largest and best preserved forts in Kerala. Bekal Beach is a lovely beach with the palm fringed surroundings and a great view of the Bekal Fort.

The beach is really long and clean but not safe for swimming. There is also adjacent park and play area and zoo for kids as well. The rocks around the bekal fort in the sea are a fantastic place to sit and meditate in the evenings. Bekal is a quieter and less crowded beach.

The beach is situated near the border of Karnataka and about 60 kms from Kannaur. At a short walk from the beach towards its northern side, there is an estuary, where one can witness the backwaters in Kerala joining the sea. Whether you are looking to spend quality time with your family and friends or remain alone, Bekal beach can be the best bet.

Beautification: Beautification of the site includes installation of two sculptures of Theyyam created using laterite on the beach and a shed the

walls of which are adorned with murals created by artisans from Nilambur. Apart from these a rock garden at the parking area has been developed where laterite boulders of various sizes have been utilised. Under the social forestry scheme, trees have been planted in the beach area.

Bekal beach, in far north Kerala (around one hour's drive from Mangalore airport in Karnataka) is famous for its old fort -the largest one in Kerala. The beaches are clean and unspoiled, but luxury hotels have already started moving into the area, making it the place for a pampered getaway.

Parking facilities: The BRDC has developed about 7000 sq. m of land for parking different types of vehicles.

Walkway: A beautiful walkway has been laid for the visiting tourists to explore the beauty of the fine coastline and enjoy the panoramic view of the Bekal Fort.

Illuminated beach: The beach gets illuminated during the evening hours so that tourists can spend more time at the beach even after the sun sets.

Resting facilities: Multi shed and Eru madam (Tree house) would provide the tourists enough facilities to take rest and enjoy the sea breeze. By using locally available materials seating arrangements have been provided for the

tourists at the beach.

Toilets: Toilets have been provided for the use of tourists and eco-friendly bamboo waste bins have been provided in the entire beach site for keeping the area clean.

Children's park: A park has been developed here for children below 14 years. In order to maintain the developed site a nominal charge of one rupee from each visitor would be collected as entry fees. A similar nominal vehicle parking fees would also be collected. The BRDC also aims to develop in future another 11 acres of land at the beach for constructing water park, theme park etc.

Bekal Fort Beach

The Bekal Fort (1 km from Bekal Beach):
The 300-year-old Bekal Fort is one of the largest and best preserved forts in Kerala. This imposing circular structure of laterite rises 130 ft. above sea level and stands on a 35 acre headland that runs into the Arabian Sea. Buses are available every 10 minutes from Kanhangad to Bekal and Kasaragod to Bekal via Chandragiri bridge - Kanhangad state highway.

Bekal Hole Aqua Park (1 km from Bekal Fort):

The only one of its kind in northern Kerala, this unique Aqua Park provides watersport facilities like pedalboats and water cycles.

Bekal Tourism Project:

130 acres of pristine land with all the attractions including backwaters, beaches, hill stations etc. is being developed into what will be Asia's finest Resort.

Nearest railway station: Kasaragod

Nearest airport: Mangalore, about 50 km from Kasaragod town; Calicut International Airport, about 200 km from Kasaragod town.

Panoramic View of Bakel Beach

A3 Papanasham Beach, Varkala – To chill out

The Papanasam beach (also called as Varkala beach), which is ten kilometers away from Varkala, is renowned for the natural spring. It is considered to have medicinal and curative properties. A dip in the holy waters at this beach is believed to purge the body of impurities and the soul of all sins; hence the name 'Papanasam beach'.

When the neighboring Kovalam beach got taken over by bulldozers and chain resorts, the surfers drifted over to Varkala. The long stretch of sand is flanked by rocky cliffs which is lined by an assortment of shacks (local cafes) serving plates of beer and fish cuisine in non-air conditioned huts.

If you're looking for laid back beaches s and are fed up with the crowds and prices in places like Kovalam, then its well worth checking out Varkala. The resort area lies along two cliffs, north and south, overlooking the beach areas. The main Papanasam beach is between these, while less crowded Black Beach is to the north. This entire area is easily accessible by walking the fine sidewalk along the cliff edges. Main Tourist Attractions in Varkala are Sivagiri Mutt which was founded Sree Narayana Guru, Janardhana Swamy temple, coir processing centers and Anjengo and its British Fort.

Papanasham Beach is located 10 meters from Varkala, Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. A dip in the Papanasham sea is considered holy. A remarkable feature here is the long stretch of red laterite cliffs fringing the beach. The cliff-top is an ideal place to watch the spectacular sunset. A natural spring, said to have curative properties, originates from the cliff.

Varkala Beach overlooked by Cliffs

The fun of sea and sun bathing or watching the wave crash are not the only attractions of beaches. There is a belief that a dip in waters of Papanasam Beach at Varkala, 45 km north of Thiruvananthapuram, washes away sins. Priests from the 2,000-year-old Janardhana temple are there to assist believers to perform the rituals. The main bell of the temple was presented by the Dutch captain of a sailing ship in the 17th century. Comparatively lower hotel tariffs and cheap food draw in European backpackers and domestic tourists with lower budget to the place.
Varkala beach is the pick of the beaches in Kerala, in terms of ambiance and facilities. Although more and more tourists are flocking there every year, it's still less crowded than Kovalam and the scenery is striking. The beach lies at the bottom of a long stretch of cliff that's bordered by beach shacks and shops. You can stay right on the cliff, overlooking the ocean, or set back from it. It's incredibly romantic! Lots of young foreigners and couples enjoy this beach.

The Sivagiri Mutt, founded by the great Hindu reformer and philosopher Sree Narayana Guru (1856 - 1928) is also close by. The Samadhi (the final resting place) of the Guru here attracts thousands of devotees every year during the

Sivagiri Pilgrimage days - 30th December to 1st January. Sree Narayana Guru propagated the ideology: "one caste, one religion and one god", in a society torn by the taboos of caste system.

Varkala offers excellent accommodation facilities for tourists and is fast becoming a popular health resort with many Ayurvedic Massage Centres.

Nearest railway station: Varkala, about 2 km
Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport, about 37 km
Location - Lattitude:8.740543, Longitude: 76.716785

A4 Shankhumugham Beach, Thiruvananthapuram

Shankumugham Beach is around 8 KMs from Thiruvanathapuram, and is famous for the statue of ‘matsya kanyaka’ – the mermaid and a restaurant shaped like a starfish. This beach is a favourite haunt of sunset watchers. The beach is adjacent to the thiruvananthapuram airport and veli tourist village. An indoor recreation club and the beach the major attractions here.

The beach is famed for its sunset and to see it many throng here in the evening. Apart from the sunset, Shankhumugham beach is considered important as the annual Bali Tarpanam (Prayers for the dead) is held here.

Mandapam at Shankhumugham Beach

The Aaraat (festival procession) of the Padmanabhaswamy temple also takes place here each year; this famous festival concludes after taking a dip in the water of Shankhumugham beach.

The beach is adjacent to the Trivandrum International Airport and Veli Tourist Village. An indoor recreation club, the matsya kanyaka (a gigantic, 35 m long sculpture of a mermaid), a restaurant and a children's park are some of the attractions at the Shankhumugham beach.

Nearest railway station: Thiruvananthapuram Central, about 7 km
Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport is a short drive away
Location - Lattitude:8.480437, Longitude: 76.912529

A5 Marine Drive

It is considered to be one of the most beautiful part of Kochi. The marine walk is the main hangout for the local populace as the view of the backwaters and harbour from here is excellent.

Bolghatty (3 KMs from Ernakulam by Boat)
This palace was built by the Dutch in 1744. Later it became the seat of the British Resident of Cochin. The grounds have a small golf course & several vantage points for lovely views of the harbour & the sea.

Willingdon Island (Connected to the mainland by road-cum-railway Venduruthy Bridge). It is a manmade island named after Lord Willingdon a former British Viceroy to india. Cochin Harbour, Southern Naval Command, Port Trust of India etc. are situated at Willingdon Island.

May Visit Beaches

B1 Kappad beach, Kozhikode

Kappad Beach is located about 16 km from Calicut town and is well known as the point at which Vasco da Gama landed on May 27, 1498, when on his first visit to Kerala. The beach is enjoyable and has safe waters and you can even watch fishermen going out for fishing and coming back in the evening to spread their catches in Kappad beach. There is also a rocky headland stretching into the sea and a 100-year-old temple.
For the people of Kozhikode, this pleasant stretch of rock-studded beach is Kappakkadavu. To the tourist it is one of the most charming of Kerala's beaches. Kappad finds mention in history and geography texts as the gateway to the Malabar Coast. Here, 501 years ago on 27th May 1498, 170 men led by the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama (1460-1524) sailed in and stepped into Kerala to create a new chapter in history; the story of a long and tumultuous socio-political relationship between India and Europe.

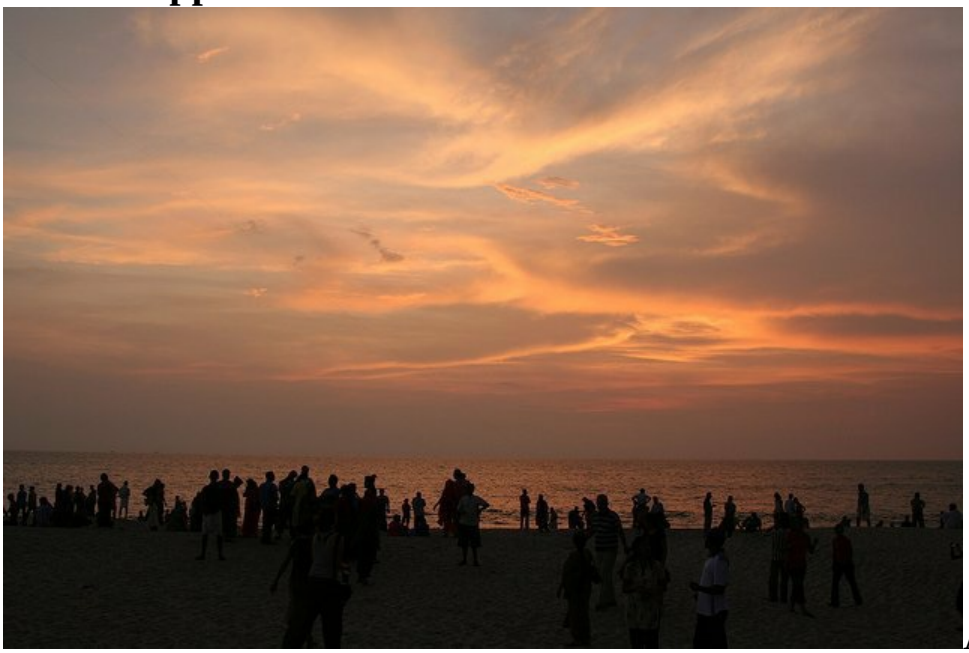
It was the spices and wealth of Malabar that first brought the Arabs, the Phoenicans, the Greeks, the Romans, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English to Kerala. Kappad has witnessed many such landings. Kozhikode was then the most important trade centre of the Malabar region and the Zamorins who ruled this mighty land were powerful and shrewd. Though the Portuguese were welcomed in Kozhikode they were not too well encouraged

or entertained for long by the Zamorins, which might be the reason they shifted their base to Kochi and Kollam towards south.

Today only a little stone monument is left at the Kappad beach to speak of its great historic importance. On the rocks nearby is a temple believed to be 800 years old. To the tourist, this little seafaring town is a haven. The best route to Kappad is along the backwaters. Unspoilt and uncrowded, the picturesque backwaters of Kozhikode offer a bewitching experience. A ride down the backwaters through the Korappuzha river brings you to the beach.

Nearest railway station: Kozhikode, about 35 km, via NH 17
Nearest airport: Calicut International Airport, about 45 km, via NH 17
Location - Lattitude:11.389167, Longitude: 75.717716

B2 Alappuzha Beach

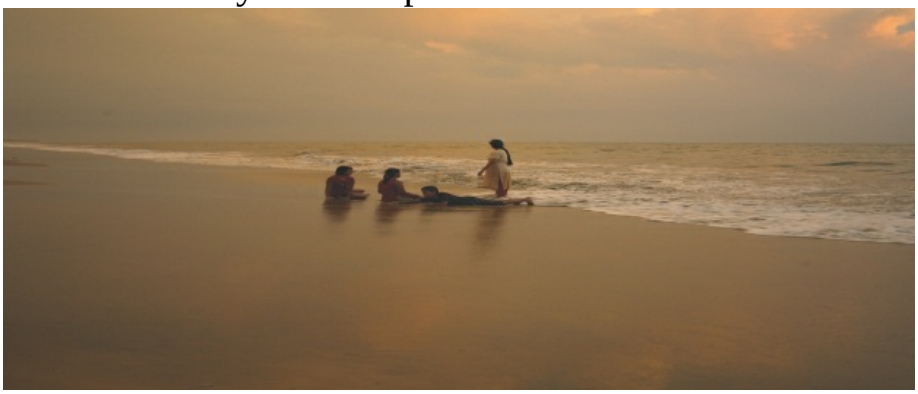


Alleppey is famous for its backwaters, houseboats, fishing and coir industry. Howeever Alleppey beach in which there is a 137 years old pier, which extends into the sea is a popular tourist spot in Kerala . Alleppey beach has a lighthouse and the entertainment facilities at the Vijaya Beach Park is also popular. Referred to as the Venice of the East, Alappuzha has always enjoyed an important place in the maritime history of Kerala. Today, it is famous for its boat races, backwater holidays, beaches, marine products and coir industry. Alappuzha beach is a popular picnic spot. There is also an old lighthouse nearby which is greatly fascinating to visitors.

Another delightful experience while in Alappuzha is a houseboat cruise. The ones you find in the backwaters of Alappuzha are in fact reworked version of Kettuvallams of olden times. The original Kettuvallams or rice barges used to carry tons of rice and spices. The Kettuvallam or 'boat with knots' was so called because the entire boat was held together with coir knots only. Of late, houseboats come with all creature comforts of a good hotel including furnished bedrooms, modern toilets, cozy living rooms, a kitchen and even a balcony for angling. And one can always enjoy uninterrupted views of backwater life while staying in a houseboat.
Nearest railway station: Alappuzha
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 85 km from Alappuzha
Location - Lattitude: 9.492853, Longitude: 76.317726

B3 Cherai Beach, Kochi

Along with being a coconut tree fringed beach, Cherai beach in Kochi is also known for the multi-hued seashells. A picturesque beach, Cherai remains crowded year round. The major attraction of the beach is the point where the backwater meets the sea. The tides are usually low here, thus creating a wonderful opportunity for swimming for beginners as well. It is a fun place to go with family and friends and of course splashing water on each other is the best activity to take up here.



Sunset at Cherai Beach

Cherai Beach, a picturesque beach, located on the north-end of the Vypeen Island is ideal for swimming. Lined with luscious green coconut groves and paddy fields, this sandy beach is a unique combination of the sea and the backwaters, studded with seashells of various hues and shapes. Dolphines are occasionally seen here. Thick coconut groves and Chinese fishing nets on the waterfront are added attractions.

Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 20 km
Location - Lattitude:10.139904, Longitude: 76.178455

B4 Thalikulam Snehatheeram Beach, Thrissur

Referred to as ‘Love Shore’, Snehatheeram beach is an ideal picnic spot. Situated in Thalikulam, which is 25 KMs from Thrissur, this beach has an open auditorium, open beach, water sports and a lot more. It is reckoned to be one of the most scenic beaches in Kerala and an idyllic place for family hangouts and picnics. Snehatheeram Beach is a perfect picnic spot to spend the day or evening. Visitors can enjoy the sandy shore, the beach park and lovely sunsets.

Nearest railway station: Thrissur, about 16 km away
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 46 km away
Location - Lattitude:10.436136, Longitude: 76.081284

B5 Marari Beach - For Serenity

Quiet Marari beach is located not far from Alleppey, making it convenient for those who'd like to spend some time at the beach in between going on a houseboat trip along the backwaters. A big attraction there is the earth conscious Marari Beach Resort. It's set on a sprawling property filled with coconut groves and lotus ponds, and amongst other things offers Ayurveda treatments and yoga classes on the beach.

Marari Beach is in Alleppey district and is located on the way to Alleppey from Kochi .This is a sleepy little fishing village, is an idyllic location for a vacation with coconut trees lining the white sandy shore in the beach. Marari beach is of the ‘endless-golden-sands-where-you-won’t -see-a-soul’ variety, usually touted for their peace and quiet of beaches. It is an endless vista of sand and surf, but it is more. An authentic experience of the world of Kerala’s traditional fishing villages, and a recreation of an ancient, harmonious way of life. Marari offers endless miles of empty sands and coconut trees by the sea side, virgin territory where you can experience to local charm and traditional Kerala hospitality at its best.

B6 Beypore in Kozhikode

Beypore is located in Kozhikode at the mouth of the Chaliyar River. Historically, it has a special place as being one of the prominent ports and fishing harbours, and was also an important trade and maritime centre during the days of the early Arab and Chinese travellers and later the Europeans. Soon after gaining prominence as a port and trade centre, Beypore slowly began to flourish as a centre for shipbuilding, since ships were in great demand merchants from Western Asia. The shipbuilding yard at Beypore port is famous for its traditional construction of the Uru or the Arabian trading vessel. This tradition of shipbuilding is nearly 1,500 years old, and the craftsmanship of the workers here is exceptional.

Traditionally, Arabs constitute the major chunk of buyers. They place orders with their specifications and needs. Unlike modern day shipbuilding involving the development of blueprint and machinery to facilitate manufacturing of ships, here, at Beypore everything is conceived in the minds of the shipwrights, who as a team execute the highly intricate woodwork to perfection. It is an amazing aspect if one is to observe the manner in which the Uru takes shape with minimum sophistication in production. The entire team observes certain work ethics, of which discipline is the foremost. A visit to this historic place is a must in order to have a close look at some of the deft fingers and alert minds, measuring and fixing different parts of the ship to perfection.

Nearby attractions in Beypore include the fishing harbour, hardly a kilometer from the shipbuilding yard and Kadalundi Bird Sanctuary, which is about 7 km from Beypore. The Kadalundi estuary is considered as a birdwatchers, paradise, due to the variety of local as well as migratory bird life. Migratory birds flock here in large numbers during February-March. The sanctuary is spread over a group of islands in a scenic area surrounded by hillocks where the Kadalundi River flows into the Arabian Sea. The place is locally known as Kadalundi Nagaram.

Nearest railway station: Kozhikode, about 10 km
Nearest airport: Calicut International Airport, about 21 km
Location - Lattitude:11.167292, Longitude: 75.808002

B7 Chowara Beach

Chowara Beach is a long white sandy beach near Kovalam where you can see lines of fishermen pulling in their nets while watching gorgeous sunsets.

It is relatively clean and less crowded than Kovalam and Varkala beaches in Trivandrum. The best experience in the beach is early morning trips whereby you can watch the fishermen land their catch then auction it off which is a unique experience.

Fishing Boat at Chowara Beach

B8 Neendakara Beach

Situated about 8 kms north of Kollam. Neendakara was the Headquarters of the Indo-Norwegian Fisheries Community project until 1961.The important institutions under this project are the boat building yard at Sakthikulangara the Fisherman's Training Institute, the ice factory and the refrigeration Plant.

Neendakara Beach in Kollam is a prominent fishing harbour located in Kollam. The view of the Ashtamudi Lake merging in to the Arabian sea from

the Neendakara Bridge is memorable and the this is another place other than Kochi where you can see the Chinese fishing nets silhouetted against the sky.

Other Beaches

C1 Muzhappilangad Beach (15 KMs from Kannur and 8 km from Thalassery)

Black rocks protect this long; clean beach from the currents of the deep, making it shallows waters a swimmer's paradise. Perhaps this is Kerala's only drive- in beach where you can drive entire length of 4 km.

C2 Chavakkad Beach (25 KMs from Thrissur)

A sea shore for rare scenic beauty. Acknowledged as one of the best beaches along the west coast. Unaltered by modernisation and laced on the borders by an array of coconut palms.

C3 Kappil Beach (6 KMs from Bekal Fort)

This beach is a remote and secluded one and is a major tourist attraction. The Kodi cliff nearby offers a panoramic view.

Fishermen with fishing nets at Kapil Beach

C4 Kanwatheertha Beach (3 KMs from Manjeswaram)

A large swimming pool-like formation of the sea on the vast beach is the main attraction.

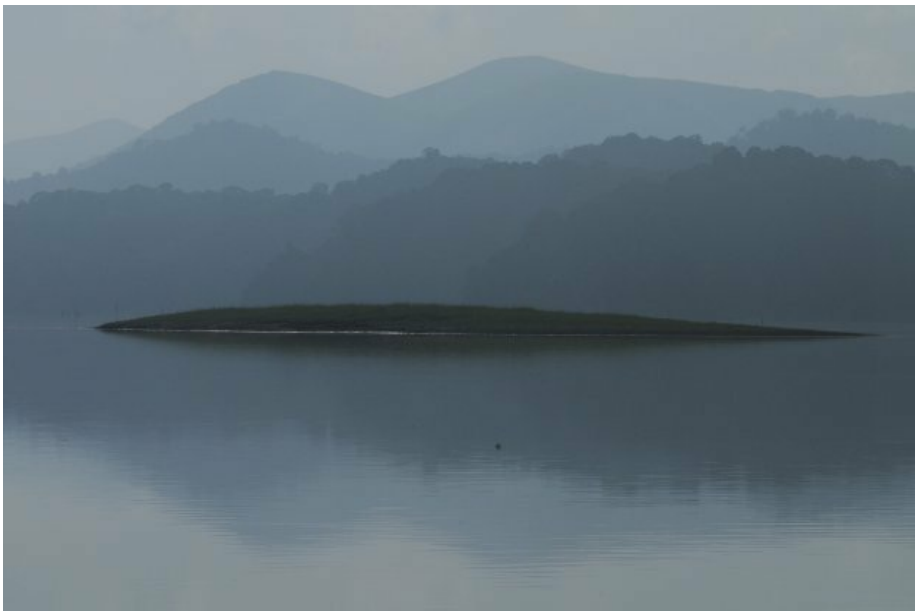
Chapter VIII
Wild Life

MUST VISIT LOCATIONS

8.1 Periyar Tiger Reserve, Thekkady

It is one of the finest wildlife reserves in the World. Spread across the entire area is picturesque plantations and hill towns that hold great opportunities for treks and mountain walks. It has to its credit more than 2000 flowering plants including 143 orchids. The only south Indian conifer, scientifically known as *Podocarpus wallichianus*, grows in the forests of Periyar Tiger Reserve.

With regard to fauna, more than 60 species are found here which includes the elephant, Tiger, bison, sambar deer, Indian wild dog, Leopard, Barking deer etc. Several of these can be seen on a boat cruise in the Periyar Lake. The Nilgiri tahr is confined to the higher rocky areas whereas the endangered lion tailed macaque can be found in the forests. So far as birds are concerned there are as many as 265 species including migrants. Hornbill, Whitebellied Treepie, drongos, woodpeckers, flycatchers, babblers, Malabar trogon, etc are common. A large number of poisonous as well as non-poisonous snakes are present in this forest area. Tea, cardamom, pepper and coffee plantations abound in the areas adjoining the Tiger Reserve. There are a few watch towers inside Periyar Tiger Reserve which are excellent for viewing wildlife.



The pride of Kerala and a testimony to nature's splendour and human innovation, the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary is situated on the banks of the Periyar Lake - an artificial lake, at Thekkady. Here the high ranges of the Western Ghats are clothed in dense evergreen, moist deciduous forests and savannah grasslands. Below this thick green canopy roam herds of elephants, sambars, tigers, gaurs, lion tailed macaques and Nilgiri langurs.

Nearest railway station: Kottayam Railway Station is about 110 KMs from Thekkady

Nearest airport: Madurai, about 140 KMs & Cochin International Airport, about 190 KMs from Thekkady

Location - Lattitude:9.4679, Longitude: 77.143328

8.2 Silent Valley National Park, Palakkad

Silent Valley National Park with an area of 237 sq km is located in Palakkad district. Extremely fragile, a unique preserve of tropical evergreen rain forests which is a veritable nursery of flora and fauna, some of which are found nowhere else in the world. The core of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is the Silent Valley National Park. Despite its name, the Silent Valley (the clamour of Cicadas is conspicuously absent here) is a rich storehouse of biodiversity. It is a true Garden of Eden for students of life sciences, professional scientists and field biologists. Perhaps, nowhere else can one find such a representative collection of Western Ghats biodiversity - more than 1000 species of flowering plants, more than 34 species of mammals, about 200 species of butterflies, 400 species of moths, 128 species of beetles, about 150 species of birds.

The River Kunthi descends from the Nilgiri hills, from an altitude of 2000 meters above sea level, and traverses the entire length of the valley and rushes down to the plains through the deep gorge. The River Kunthi never turns brown and is always crystal clear and wild.

Nearest railway station: Palakkad, about 69 KMs away

Nearest airport: Coimbatore International Airport (Tamil Nadu), about 91 KMs

Location - Lattitude:11.130066, Longitude: 76.42911

8.3 Eravikulam National Park

Ideal place for seeing the biodiversity of high elevation ecosystem. Visitors are taken to Rajamalai in forest dept vehicles and private vehicles are not allowed there. National Park is usually closed at the time of calving of Nilgiri Tahr which is usually during the early months of every year.

A sanctuary for the endangered mountain goat of South India, the Nilgiri Tahr (Hemitragus hylocrious), this Park stands out for the stark beauty of its rolling grasslands and sholas, spread over 97 sq KMs in the hills. Anamudi, the highest peak (2695 m) south of Himalayas, stands majestically in the core area of this park. The slopes of the hills abound in many kinds of rare flora which include rare terrestrial and epiphytic orchids, and beautiful wild balsams. Important fauna here are the Nilgiri Tahr, Nilgiri Langur, leopard, tiger, Indian bison, etc.

Rajamalai is the tourism zone of the National Park, which has a very

informative interpretation centre. A protected area, the sanctuary is divided into three regions - the core area, the buffer area and the tourism area. Visitors are allowed only to the tourism area only.
Nearest railway station: Angamallly, about 108 KMs
Nearest airport: Madurai (Tamilnadu) about 142 KMs; Cochin International Airport, about 150 KMs.
Location - Lattitude:10.196, Longitude: 77.004318

8.4 Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary

Kumarakom bird sanctuary, spread across 14 acres, has an interesting variety of birdlife. Months of June, July and August is the breeding season of resident wetland birds such as Indian Darter, Little cormorant, different species of egrets and herons, white ibis, kingfishers, etc. Between the months of November and May, the bushes and woods of the sanctuary play host to some rare migratory birds. Vembanad lake attracts waterfowl like pin-tailed duck, garganey teal, spot-billed duck, osprey, steppe eagle, etc.

Bird lovers can also take a boat trip to the nearby Pathiramanal, Narakathara, Poothapandi Kayal and so on to catch birdlife.
Nearest railway station: Kottayam, about 13 KMs
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 94 KMs
Location - Lattitude:9.625122, Longitude: 76.450882

8.5 Kadalundi Bird Sanctuary

This sanctuary is spread over a cluster of islands in a scenic area where the Kadalundi River flows into the Arabian Sea. This island is the abode more than a hundred species of native birds and several species of migratory birds, like seagulls, terns, sandpipers, sand plovers, greenshanks, turnstones, that flock here in large numbers from November to April.

A small hill nearby, which is 200 meters above sea level, offers a splendid view of the river mouth and the sea. Kadalundi is also known for a wide variety of fish, mussels and crabs.

Nearest railway station: Kozhikode, about 19 KMs

Nearest airport: Calicut International Airport, about 30 KMs

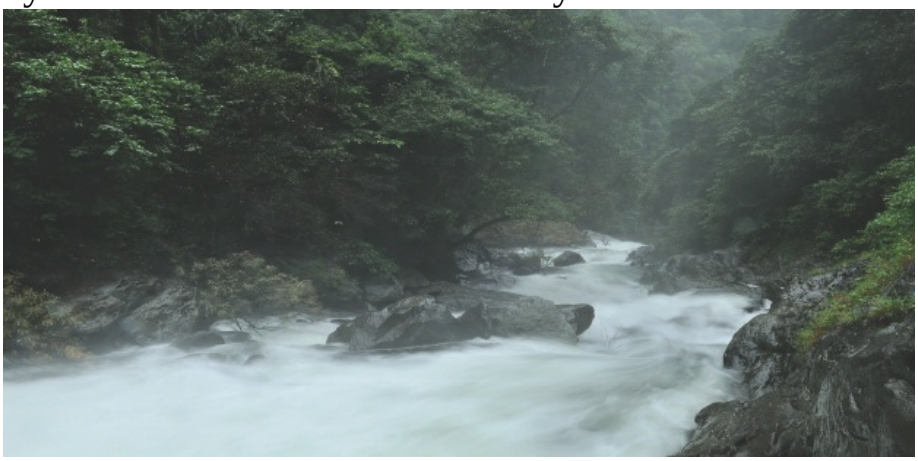
Lattitude:11.129897, Longitude: 75.82552

8.6 Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary

Location: Aralam, Thalassery, Kannur District.

Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary is spread over 55 sq KMs of undulating forested highlands on the slopes of the Western Ghats. The highest peak here is Katti Betta which rises to a majestic 1145 meters above sea level. Covered with tropical and semi evergreen forests, the Aralam Sanctuary is home to a vast variety of flora and fauna endemic to the Western Ghats. Elephant, gaur, sambar, spotted deer, barking deer, Nilgiri langur, Hanuman langur, Malabar giant squirrel, etc can be seen here.

Aralam is noted for the Central State Farm, a 3060 hectare farm started in 1971 by Indian Government. This is one of the main production centres of hybrid coconut seeds in the country.



Nearest railway station: Thalassery, about 55 KMs away
Nearest airport: Calicut International Airport, about 96 KMs from Thalassery
Location - Lattitude:11.93857, Longitude: 75.845375

8.7 Idukki Wildlife Sanctuary

A land-locked district, Idukki is one of the most nature-rich areas of Kerala. Idukki Wildlife Sanctuary spreads over an area of 105 sq KMs. Situated at an altitude of 500-750 meters above sea level, this sanctuary occupies the forest land between the Cheruthoni and Periyar rivers. There is a scenic lake around the sanctuary, covered by an enchanting canopy of tropical ever-green and deciduous trees.

Taking a boat ride will surely enhance your memories. Elephants, buffalo, sambar deer, wild dogs, tiger, wild boar etc. are seen here apart from various species of snakes. Birds include grey jungle fowl, grey hornbill, woodpeckers, bulbuls, flycatchers, etc. The wildlife here is similar to that of Thekkady.

Nearest railway station: Kottayam, about 114 KMs

Nearest airport: Madurai about 140 KMs away; Cochin International Airport, about 190 KMs

Location - Lattitude:9.7791, Longitude: 76.973248

May Visit Locations

8.B1 Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary, Thiruvananthapuram

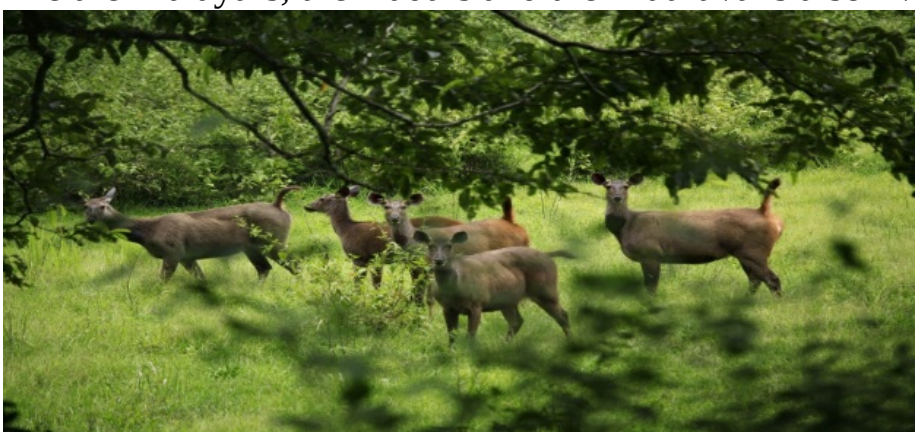
Neyyar Dam is located about 32 km from Thiruvananthapuram. It is a popular picnic spot with a lake and a picturesque dam site. The lake formed by the dam across the Neyyar River is the bluest of blue, making boating irresistible for tourists.

The Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary of which the dam is a part is the habitat of over a hundred species of fauna including Lion, Asian Elephant, Tiger, Leopard, Slender Loris and reptiles like King Cobra, Tortoise, etc. A crocodile breeding centre and a lion safari park are also located in the dam site.

Nearest railway station: Thiruvananthapuram Central
Nearest airport: Trivandrum International Airport
Location - Lattitude:8.560991, Longitude: 77.172718

8.B2 Parambikkulam Tiger Reserve, Palakkad

Located around 110 km from Palakkad district of Kerala, Parambikkulam is an oasis of tranquil greenery nestled in a valley between the Anamalai ranges of Tamilnadu and the Nelliyampathy ranges of Kerala. The Parambikkulam Tiger Reserve spreads over an area of 285 sq km. The sanctuary offers an exotic experience of the rare fauna and flora of Kerala. Quite a few hill tribes, like the Malayars, the Kadars and the Muthuvans also live here.



Here lives Nilgiri langur, Lion-tailed macaque, tiger, Nilgiri tahr, Asian elephant, Spotted deer etc. The oldest teak tree 'Kannimari' stands tall here. With the treasure trove of nature, the sanctuary is a heaven for the wildlife enthusiast. Boat cruises can be arranged in the Parambikkulam Reservoir. Trekking in the sanctuary is also possible.

Nearest railway station: Palakkad
Nearest airport: Coimbatore International Airport
Location - Lattitude:10.396099, Longitude: 76.775328

8.B3 Chimmini Dam and Sanctuary

The dense tropical forests of Chimmini, shelter diverse flora and fauna. The dam across the Chimmini river offers a breathtaking view. This picturesque picnic spot is a favourite haunt of the local people. Chimmini is located in Thrissur District. Chimmini Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1984. The sanctuary is endowed with scenic beauty beyond compare. Here you are likely to watch elephants, sambars, gaurs, Malabar squirrels, bears etc. You can also enjoy trekking.
Nearest railway station: Thrissur, about 30 KMs
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 60 KMs
Location - Lattitude:10.438858, Longitude: 76.478519
Best time to visit: November to April

8.B4 Peechi-Vazhani Wildlife Sanctuary

The Peechi-Vazhani Wildlife Sanctuary in Thrissur district is a good spot for nature lovers. It was established in 1958 and is located about 20 KMs east of Thrissur, in the catchment area of the Peechi and Vazhani dams. The sanctuary is part of the Palapilli-Nelliampathy forests and forms the Northern boundary of the Chimmini Sanctuary. This place is a treat for the nature lovers. There are different kinds of orchids, innumerable rare medicinal plants, teak, rosewood, and so on. The faunal diversity includes over 25 species of mammals including carnivores like the leopard, tiger, jungle cat and herbivores like the Sambar deer, barking deer, spotted deer, Indian bison, elephant etc. The highest peak in the sanctuary is the 923 meters high Ponmudi. The average annual rainfall is about 3000 mm.

Nearest railway station: Thrissur
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 98 KMs away
Location - Lattitude:10.484436, Longitude: 76.433144

8.B5 Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary, Ernakulam

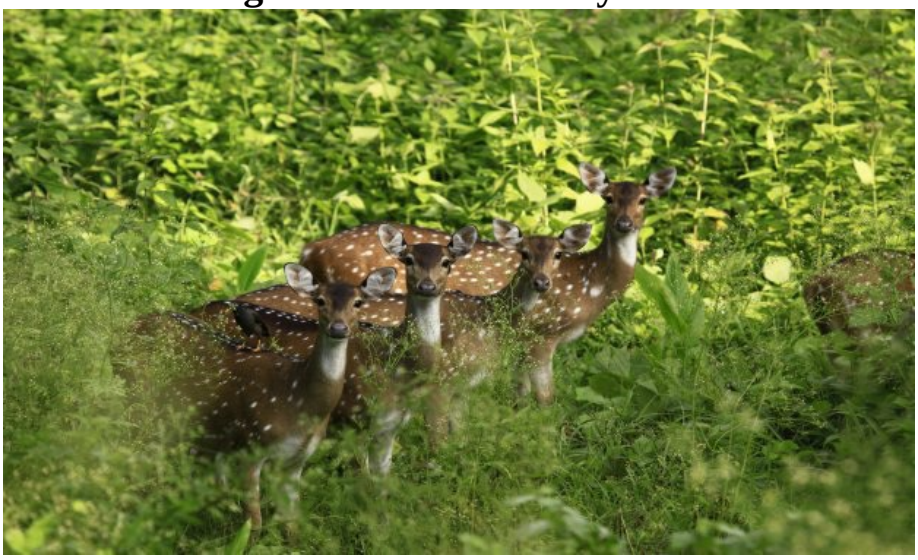
It is made up of tropical evergreen and deciduous forests and some grassland patches. After Dr. Salim Ali's famous bird survey of Travancore in the early 1930s, he reported that this area is extremely rich in bird diversity and that it should be made into a bird sanctuary. More than 300 species of birds are found here. Spread across 25 sq. km. the sanctuary lies between the tributaries of the River Periyar like a peninsula. Birds like Srilankan Frogmouth, Racket tailed Drongo, Bronzed Drongo, Whitebellied Treepie, Shama, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Rufous Babbler, Malabar Parakeet, Whitebellied Blue Flycatcher, Malabar Grey Hornbill, are some of the birds that can be easily seen here. Thattekkad also has extensive plantations of teak, rosewood, mahogany.
Nearest railway station: Aluva
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, just 40 KMs
Location - Lattitude:10.104627, Longitude: 76.702845

8.B6 Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary in Idukki

Chinnar, a unique thorny scrub forest is the habitat for the endangered Giant Grizzled Squirrel of India. It's total number now would be less than 200. Located in the rain shadow area of the Western Ghats, unlike other sanctuaries in Kerala, Chinnar gets only less than two months of rain in a year. This place is ideal for trekking. An extensive Sandalwood forest nearby is an added attraction. As one travels from Karimuthi to Chinnar, elephants, spotted deer, sambar, hanuman langur and even peacocks can be seen on either side of the road.

Nearest railway station: Ernakulam, about 230 KMs.
Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 200 KMs

8.B7 Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary



Muthanga Wildlife sanctuary is contiguous to the protected area network of Nagarhole and Bandipur of Karnataka and Mudumalai of Tamil Nadu. Rich in bio-diversity, the sanctuary is an integral part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The management lays emphasis on scientific conservation with due consideration for the general lifestyle of the tribals and others who live in and around the forest region.

Elephants roam freely here and tigers are sighted occasionally. Various species of deer, monkeys, birds etc can also be seen. A drive along the road to Muthanga and further, offers chances to watch these roaming animals.
Nearest railway station: Kozhikode
Nearest airport: Calicut International Airport

Location - Lattitude:11.673755, Longitude: 76.36817
Best time to visit: June to October

8.B8 Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary

Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary is contiguous to the protected area network of Nagarhole and Bandipur of Karnataka on the Northeast and Mudumalai of Tamil Nadu on the Southeast. Rich in bio-diversity, the sanctuary is an integral part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, which has been established with the specific objective of conserving the biological heritage of the region.
Nearest railway station: Kozhikode, about 110 KMs away
Nearest airport: Calicut International Airport
Location - Lattitude:11.76452, Longitude: 76.243687

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