



CHAMPAKULAM MOOLAM VALLAMKALI



**Panchayat/
Municipality/
Corporation**

Champakulam Panchayat

District

Alappuzha

**Nearest Town/
Landmark/ Junction**

Champakulam Post Office -300m

Nearest Bus station

Champakulam Bus Stop -4 00 m

**Nearest Railway
station**

Ambalapuzha Railway Station - 10 Km

Nearest Airport

Cochin International Airport – 98 Km



District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC)
Boat Jetty Road
Near KSRTC Bus Station
Alappuzha -11
Phone 1: +91-477-2251796
Phone 2: +91-477-2253308
Email: info@dtpcalappuzha.com



TIME

DATES

June/July (*Midhunam, Moolam* star)

FREQUENCY

Annual

DURATION

1 Day

The Champakulam Moolam Boat Race is one of the oldest *vallam kali* (snake boat race) (after the Aranmula Boat Race) in Kerala . The race is held on the River Pamba on Moolam of the Malayalam month *Midhunam*, the day of the installation of the deity at the Ambalappuzha Sree Krishna Temple. It is said that the Raja of Chempakasseri, Pooradam Thirunal Devanarayanan, built a temple at Ambalappuzha as suggested by the royal astrologers, but just before the installation of the deity (Lord Krishna) he was informed that the idol was not auspicious. It was important to install a suitable idol immediately. Accordingly, the priests identified another idol of Lord Krishna, kept at the Karinkulam temple in Kurichi. This idol was believed to have been given to Arjuna by Lord Krishna himself, and was therefore considered very sacred. After getting the idol from Karinkulam temple, the Raja's men set forth by boat for the return journey. While returning to Ambalappuzha, night set in, and, as instructed by the Raja, they took shelter at a Christian household, the home of Mappilassery Itty Thommen, in the village of Champakulam. Itty Thommen was a loyal subject and a confidant of the king. Itty Thommen and his family received the men and the idol with great honour. The next day, the Raja and his entourage turned up at Mappilassery, accompanied by a huge mass of people. Pujas were offered to the deity and Itty Thommen and his men also travelled with the flotilla to Ambalapuzha where the idol was duly consecrated and installed with great fanfare. On the way, the people of Champakulam and adjoining areas, as well as the priests and laity of the Champakulam Kallookadu Church, honoured the Raja and the idol.

These events took place in 1545 A.D. The Raja, pleased with the love and affection shown to him by his Christian subjects, declared that henceforth, to commemorate these events, a great water carnival would be held at Champakulam every year, on *Moolam* day in the Malayalam month of Mithunam. Thus began the Champakulam Snake Boat Race and related functions, which continue to this day. In 1613 A.D., sixty-three years after the idol was given shelter at Mappilassery, the old house was being demolished and a new one being built. Raja Devanarayanan's successor heard the news and immediately sent word to Itty Thommen's son, Kunhi Thommen that the area where the idol was kept, which was considered a *devasthanam* or sacred place, was to be specially demarcated and used only as a place of worship. A special lamp, made of rare metals, was given to the family, to be kept in this holy place, and perpetually burning, as an eternal flame. Special privileges were also conferred on the family, including the grant of lands and coconut groves to supply the oil for the lamp.

Even today, these practices continue. The lamp is kept perpetually burning. Every year priests and other delegates from the temple call at the house on Moolam day, with gifts and *prasadam* for the *karanavar* or head of the house. This ceremony is known as the *Moolakazcha*. It is believed that on *Moolam* Day, Lord Krishna resides not at the Temple, but at Mappilassery House. Reverentially, on unshod feet, the Temple delegates enter the prayer room, where along with Christian icons like the cross, and statues of Jesus and Mary, the lamp, known as the *Vazhakoombu Vilakku* is given a place of prominence. The temple representatives then venerate the lamp, and are treated by the family to a sumptuous feast. It is only after all these ceremonies that the famous Champakulam Snake Boat Race commences.



RELEVANCE-
(Local / National / International)

National



NO. OF PEOPLE PARTICIPATED

Approximately 1,00,000

EVENTS/PROGRAMS

Religious Discourses
Boat Race Of Various
Categories
Vanchipaattu
Prize Distribution

DESCRIPTION (How festival is celebrated)

On the day of the race, people, both locals and travelers from far off places, flock the river bank to enjoy the race. Venturous spirits will ensure a better vantage point by climbing the nearby trees. The Boating race is inaugurated after religious discourses at Temple and church.

As the sun comes straight on top of all gathered, boats in various categories like the *chundan* (snake boat), *veppu*, *iruttu kuthi*, *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. Around 20 boats are mostly found offering participation under various categories for the race. The track length at Champakulam is 1240m.

The celebrations include magnificent water floats and decorated boats, the songs of the oarsmen called Vanchipattu and the most exciting Chundanvallom race. Chundans are type of boats that are over 100 feet long with elevated prows. They were first referred as snake boats by the foreign rulers. With over five hundred years of tradition the pageant is still carried out with the same enthusiasm. The striking procession of water floats, decorated boats with vibrant parasols and performing arts welcomes the spectator before the race. The race is held in a variety of stages for different categories of boats. The race is considered as the ultimate test of endurance, speed and skill and rowers undergo rigorous training for several days before participating in the race.

Being the largest sporting event in the world, snake boat race is often considered as the ultimate test of endurance, speed and skill. After the race, prize is distributed for various categories. Rajapramukhan trophy is distributed for first place winner.

