



ARTHUNKAL PERUNNAL

ST. ANDREW'S BASILICA



LOCATION

Panchayat/
Municipality/
Corporation

Cherthala Municipality

District

Alappuzha



ACCESSIBILITY

Nearest Town/
Landmark/ Junction

Cherthala Town - 8 Km

Nearest Bus Station

Arthunkal Bypass Bus Stop – 6.1 Km

Nearest Railway
Station

Cherthala Railway Station - 8 Km

Nearest Airport

Cochin International Airport - 85 Km



CONTACT

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DATES

January

FREQUENCY

Annual

DURATION

2 Weeks

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL (Legend/History/Myth)

St. Andrew's Church, Arthunkal is one of the famous pilgrim centres in South India. Though the Church is named after St. Andrew the Apostle, it is the feast of St. Sebastian that has brought fame to Arthunkal. The Christian presence in Arthunkal dates back to a very early period around the 7th century. Arthunkal Church rose to fame when in 1647 the miraculous statue of St. Sebastian was brought to Arthunkal from Italy in a ship. St. Sebastian was the captain of the body guards of the Roman Emperor Diocletian. He was brutally killed and became a martyr in 286 AD on account of his faith in Christ. People from all beliefs who were afflicted by epidemics prayed to St. Sebastian and were cured. And the feast of St. Sebastian in January began to attract thousands of people from all walks of life. Gradually Arthunkal became a pilgrim centre for people of all creed. The Church built in stone in 1602 was renovated again in 1870 with a new facade and a bell tower. There is an ancient tradition followed to this day by the devotees of the Hindu deity, Lord Ayyappa. They pay homage to St. Sebastian as they return from Sabarimala, the abode of Lord Ayyappa. Every year from January 10 to 27 the feast of St. Sebastian takes place attracting lakhs of people. The procession with the statue of St. Sebastian on 20th January is the main attraction of the feast. The historic honour of the status of Basilica was bestowed upon this church in 2010.



RELEVANCE-
(Local / National /
International)

Regional



**NO. OF PEOPLE
PARTICIPATED**

Over 3,00,000

EVENTS/PROGRAMS

Kodiyettu
Novena
Divyabali
Holy Procession
Special Prayers and
Mass
Feast

DESCRIPTION (*How festival is celebrated*)

Arthunkal Perunnal is the annual feast of St. Sebastian held at the St. Andrew's Forane Church in Arthunkal. The event witnesses devotees from across the state thronging the church to participate in the feast. One of the main events during the feast involves a ceremonial procession during which the statue of St. Sebastian is taken out from the church to the beach and back. Interestingly, an eagle is seen roaming the skies, every year during the time of the procession. This eagle too has become part of the grandmother stories, about the presence of St. Sebastian as a guardian saint for the village. On the final day, devotees crawl on their knees all the way from the nearby beach to the church. The main '*nercha*' (offering) in this church is '*Ambum Villum*' (Models of Bow and Arrow in gold, silver or rolled gold). The practice of bringing the '*nercha*' on elephants accompanied by martial dance which is known as '*Velakali*' or '*Parichakali*' and native drum band or '*Chendamelam*' still continues. The feast of St. Sebastian in Arthunkal is a grand celebration extending for two weeks in January. While the main day of the traditional feast or the *Perunnal* is on January 20, the church authorities have instituted another on January 27, to mark the end of celebrations, locally referred to as *Ettamperunnal* or 'the 8th day of the feast'.

