

Majestic emerald green lakes. Criss-crossing canals. Innumerable lagoons. Estuaries. A delta of 44 rivers... This 900 km water world constitutes the expansive backwaters that take you inland, right into the heart of beautiful, green Kerala. A cruise along these palm-fringed waterways allows you to savour glimpses of a unique life that flows by at ten kilometres per hour.

Your holiday home in this tranquil world will be the comfortably furnished houseboat. Known as kettuvalloms, which means a boat made by tying together pieces of wood, they were once the primary means of transporting cargo - mainly Kerala's staple crops of rice and coconut and even the mail and morning newspapers. Today, these sturdy vessels have been converted into luxury houseboats equipped with all modern amenities. Crafted purely out of wood, these boats are made without using a single nail.

Come, set out on a backwater journey and cherish the most unforgettable moments in life.





**Thiruvallam:** (6 km from Thiruvananthapuram) This serene backwater stretch, en route to Kovalam, is famous for its 2000-year-old temple on the banks of the River Karamana, canoe rides, kayaking and cruises in traditional boats.

Veli: (8 km from Thiruvananthapuram) The backwaters of Veli is a popular place for boating. Sandwiched between the Veli lagoon and the Arabian sea is the Veli Tourist Village. Facilities at the village include water sports and an 18-acre waterfront park with a floating bridge connecting the beach. Open 0800 - 1800 hrs. Ph: 0471-2500785

**Akkulam:** (10 km from Thiruvananthapuram) On the banks of the tranquil backwaters of Akkulam is a popular tourist village with various leisure options including boating, a children's park with a swimming pool and a musical dancing fountain. Open 1000 - 1700 hrs. Ph: 0471-2443043

**Kappil:** (53 km from Thiruvananthapuram) A confluence of the sea, river and the backwater, this secluded, picturesque spot is worth the visit. The Priyadarshini Boat Club here offers boating facilities. Ph: 0470-2662323

Kollam: (71 km to the north of Thiruvananthapuram) One of the oldest ports in the State, Kollam is where the magnificent network of waterways begins. From the famed Ashtamudi Lake, known as the gateway to the backwaters, a 130 km long system of interlinked canals and lakes winds all the way to the north. The eight-hour trip from here to Alappuzha is the longest backwater cruise in Kerala.

**Alumkadavu:** (23 km from Kollam) Along the vast expanse of the Kayamkulam Lake is the picturesque little village of Alumkadavu. This hamlet by the backwaters is home to skilled artisans who craft the enormous kettuvalloms.

**Alappuzha:** Referred to as the *Venice of the East*, this backwater country with its vast network of lakes, lagoons and freshwater rivers is immensely beautiful. Venue for the world-renowned snake boat races, Alappuzha is also famous for its marine products and coir industry.

**Kuttanad:** Known as the *Rice Bowl of Kerala* because of its wealth of paddy crops, Kuttanad in Alappuzha, is the very heart of the backwaters. This is one of the few places in the world where farming is done below sea level.

Pathiramanal:  $(1^1/2 \text{ hours by motorboat/30 min. by speedboat from Alappuzha})$  The enchanting island of Pathiramanal on the backwaters is a favourite haunt of hundreds of rare migratory birds from different parts of the world. The island lies between Thanneermukkom and Kumarakom, and is accessible only by boat.





**Kumarakom:** (10 km from Kottayam) Nestled among lush paddy fields, highlands and extensive rubber plantations is Kumarakom, one of the most popular and most beautiful backwater stretches of Kerala. An exotic picnic spot, Kumarakom provides boating, fishing and sightseeing experiences that are truly exhilarating. An exclusive attraction here is the *Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary*, which is an ornithologist's paradise.

**Kochi:** A cluster of islands on the vast expanse of the Vembanad Lake, Kochi, one of the finest natural harbours in the world, is more popular as the *Queen of the Arabian Sea*. Half the fun of visiting Kochi is going about in the local ferries. A conducted cruise through the winding waterways will take you to several quaint spots including the picturesque islands of Bolgatty, Vypeen. Gundu and Vallarpadam.

**Kozhikode:** Unexplored and unspoilt, the backwaters of Kozhikode offer delightful holiday options. Elathur, the Canoli Canal and the Kallai River are favourite places for boating. Kadalundi, with its beautiful bird sanctuary and Korapuzha, the venue of the *Korapuzha Jalotsavam* (water fiesta) are popular tourist destinations.

Valiyaparamba: (30 km from Bekal Fort in Kasaragod) This is perhaps the most scenic backwater stretch in Kerala. Fed by four rivers and dotted with numerous little islands, you can explore the backwaters in a houseboat from Kottappuram in Nileswaram to Kannur through Valiyaparamba Backwaters.

**Kottappuram:** (5 km southwest of Nileswaram) One of the oldest coir factories in Malabar is situated amongst the placid backwaters of Kottappuram. The longest walking bridge in Kerala is also in Kottappuram.





## Sip tender coconut

Refresh yourself with a sip of nature's rejuvenating nectar - the cool tender coconut and a scoop of its soft white flesh. Nutrition at its natural best, it is abundantly found along the banks of the backwaters.

## Watch toddy tapping

An exotic brew made from fermented coconut water, toddy is collected from the trees by experienced tappers either at dawn or dusk. It is an amazing sight to see them expertly climb one tree after the other.

## Picnic on an island

The backwaters are interspersed with delightful nature-rich islands. Some have resorts on it while others are ideal for a perfect day out.

## Witness a snake boat race

Cheer the fastest side as teams of 100 oarsmen row their snakeboats, their bodies swaying in unison to the fast rhythm of full-throated singing, in one of the world's most exhilarating water sports. Snake boat races are usually held during the festival of Onam.

## Behold a Kathakali performance

Kathakali, the classical dance drama of Kerala is a favourite with tourists and locals alike. Cultural evenings arranged by resorts and houseboat operators at various venues along the backwaters will provide you with an opportunity to watch a performance.

#### Learn duck farming

Duck farming is a way of life for the people living by the backwaters. Befriend a local to know more about these water birds that are an integral part of the rural landscape.

## Observe the Chinese way of fishing

Take a trip along the Kochi or Kayamkulam backwaters and watch fishermen tug at huge cantilevered nets with its rich haul. The Chinese fishing nets that billow from massive bamboo poles were brought here by traders from the court of Kublai Khan, the Mongolian King.

## Check in to a resort

The delightful resorts on the banks of the backwaters have much in store for you including theme evenings. Drop in to enjoy centuries-old art forms like Kathakali and Mohiniyattom and savour delicious cuisine as well.

# Visit a coir village

Watch nimble fingers spin water-treated coconut fibre into long ropes with a traditional hand spindle at the backwater villages. You can also shop at any of the numerous roadside stalls for brightly coloured coir mats, wall hangings and carpets.

# Discover the secrets of boat building

Find out all about the making of snakeboats, which are 100 ft long, seats

over 90 oarsmen and is built without using even a single nail. The villages at Alumkadavu in Kollam and Champakulam in Alappuzha specialize in making these boats.

# Explore a fort

The spice-rich land of Kerala has enticed traders including the Portuguese, Dutch and the British from across the seven seas. Several forts built by them form part of the tour through the backwater districts.

## Rejuvenate with Avurveda

The ancient regimens of Ayurveda, the 5000-year-old system of holistic healing, are practised to perfection in Kerala. Many of the backwater resorts have certified Ayurveda centres, while some of the houseboats offer treatment procedures onboard.

## Savour fresh catch

Enjoy steamed tapioca along with a special preparation of *karimeen* or pearl spot that is freshly caught and cooked with masala wrapped in plantain leaf, right before you. Wash it down with a swig of toddy, the fermented sweet drink of Kerala.

### Step back in time

Kerala has churches dating from the time of St. Thomas - the apostle who arrived here in 70 AD, temples that sport the Dravidian gopuram and Kerala style of architecture as well as the oldest mosque and synagogue in the country. Many of these are located along the backwaters.

# Spot a variety of birds

The backwaters are alive with a variety of birds. Watch egrets, herons and kingfishers sunning themselves or swooping in to catch a fish. Kumarakom and Kadalundi are favourite haunts of migratory birds like the Siberian stork, teals, darters etc.

## **KOLLAM**

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- Soma Houseboats Ph: 0471-2268101 Spice Coast Cruises, Willingdon Island Ph: 0484-3011711 Fax: 0484-2668001 Email: contact@cghearth.com
- Venice of the East Travel Corporation Ph: 2233862, 2239994
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  Zacharia Bazar Ph: 2262234 Water World Ph: 2239701 Fax: 2239704
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#### **KOTTAYAM**

• Kumarakom Lake Resort, Pallichira Ph: 0481-524900 Fax: 524987 Email: klresort@vsnl.com

## **ERNAKULAM**

- Ayur Nauka Ph: 2316776 Fax: 2317292 Dream Cruise, Thrikkakara Ph: 98460 03202 Fax: 0484-2382484 Email: muhammedsalim@bplmail.com
- Far Horizon Ph: 6584074 Fax: 2302625 Email: fhkochi@yahoo.co.in • Tourist Desk, Main Boat Jetty, Ernakulam Ph: 2371761
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#### KOZHIKODE

- DTPC, District Collectorate, Kozhikode Ph: 2720012 Fax: 2370582
- Mavila Resorts Ph: 0495-2352447 Fax: 2352547

 $Email: keralacruises@aol.com\ www.backwatercruises.com$ 

#### KASARAGOD

• Bekal Resorts Development Corporation Ltd. Ph: 0467-2272007 Email: brdc@sancharnet.in • Thanal Vishramakendram, Bekal Fort Ph: 0467-2272900 Bekal Boat Stay www.bekalboatstay.com

# KERALA FACT FILE

Location : Southwestern tip of India

Area : 38863 sq. km

Population : 3,18,38,619 (Census 2001)

Capital : Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum)
Language : Malayalam; English is widely spoken

Religion : Hinduism, Christianity, Islam

Time : GMT + 5:30
Currency : Indian Rupee
Climate : Tropical

(Average Summer : February - May  $(24 - 34^{\circ}C)$  temperature) Monsoon : June - September  $(20 - 30^{\circ}C)$ 

Winter: October - January (18 - 28<sup>0</sup>C)

# **Kerala Tourist Information Centres**

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