

Kerala

The state with a lot of things to see in Kerala apart from the sea. There are hills, plains and the unique backwaters.

Kerala, the land of Kera (coconut palm) is a vibrant tapestry of deeply ingrained customs, cultures and fascinating experiences.



Introduction

- Kerala is a small state and has many neighbors with whom it shares a lot of its history and traditions. Karnataka sits to its north, Tamil Nadu to its east and the Arabian Sea to its south and west. As a result, the beaches, backwaters, animal reserves and hill stations are close by, giving visitors to this breathtaking country a unique experience.
- Kerala's long sea coast is called Malabar Coast which Kerala shares with Karnataka. There are lots of fisherfolk in Kerala, owing to its long coastline. It is one of the largest fish-producing states. The main kinds of salt-water fish caught here are mackerels, sardines, tuna and prawns. Thus, the seafood is very famous in this place.
- Kerala, 'God's own country' is also an epitome of secularism and a masterpiece of unity in diversity. The entire landscape is dotted with temples, churches, mosques and synagogues.
- Today's Kerala has emerged as a major tourist destination and is ranked among ten paradises of the world by the 'National Geographic Traveller.'

History

- The State's history dates back to about 5000 and 3000 BC. For at least two millennia, people have been sailing to Kerala in pursuit of ivory, sandalwood and spices.
- Long before Vasco da Gama arrived in India, the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs and Chinese were aware of its shores. Kerala was exposed to Islam and Christianity much before the rest of India.
- Many people from different countries came here to trade. Traders from the West loved the aromatic spices grown in Kerala. The Greek, Romans and Dutch came in and out of Kerala, buying spices, especially pepper to take back with them and sell. They even stayed here. Thus, a lot of Kerala's history isn't written. During the time of Emperor Ashoka, history of Kerala was mentioned on a rock inscription.
- Kerala was ruled first by the Portuguese and then the Dutch and after the failure of Dutch, the British ruled here like other states of India.

Capital: Thiruvananthapuram

Thiruvananthapuram (Earlier Trivandrum) is the capital of Kerala. Literally known as the 'Holy city of Anantha', Thiruvananthapuram is home to Lord Vishnu, the fabled serpent with a thousand heads. The clean and beautiful capital city of Kerala sprawls elegantly over seven low coastal hills. Its tree lined avenues, massive buildings, ancestral homes, ancient temples, long sea coast and acres of palm trees and parks have a charm of their own.



Geographical Settings

- The Western Ghats runs through the eastern part of Kerala. The Anai Peak sits like a crown on the Ghats and is the highest peak in the entire range.
- There are plenty of emerald green slopes that have carpets of tea and coffee plantations down the Ghats towards the sea. The farmers are also busy with growing crops like rice, pulses, cashew, nut, coconut, tapioca and ginger. There are many spices that are grown here as well, like pepper and cardamom.
- **Rivers:** Kerala's important rivers that pour into the Arabian Sea after tumbling down the hills are Periyar, the Chalakudy, the Pamba, the Chaliyar, the Bharatapuzha (Nila).
- **Seasons:** Kerala actually has two monsoons. One arrives in June and the other in October. That is when the state becomes green and fresh and it is the lovely time to visit.
- **Forests:** The slopes of Kerala have given some rich forests.
- **Wildlife:** The deep forests are home to some amazing wildlife, like gaurs, sambar deer, nilgiri thar, lion-tailed Macaques, leopards, bonnet monkeys etc.

State Tree & State Flower

Coconut Tree



Golden Shower



State Animal & State Bird

Elephant



Hornbill



Kochi- Ernakulam(Earlier Cochin)

Kochi-Ernakulam : The commercial capital and the cosmopolitan city of Kerala is an excellent blend of traditions and modernity. Kochi- the “Queen of the Arabian Sea” is full of history, legends and natural beauty. These huge cantilevered fishing nets are the landmark of Malabar Coast. The nets were introduced between 1350 and 1450 A.D. by traders from the court of Kublai Khan in China. They are set up on teak wood and bamboo poles and are mainly used during the high tide.



Alappuzha (Earlier Alleppey)

Alluring Alappuzha, the **‘Venice of the East’** is endowed with exceptional natural beauty and has emerged as a major tourist destination of the state. The serene Vembanad lake covering an area of 204 sq. kms. Stretches from Alappuzha to Kochi and the Kayamkulam lake with an area of 59.57 sq.km. extends to the districts of Alappuzha and Kollam. These lakes are widely used for the inland water transport of cargo and passengers in the region and provides a perfect introduction to the amazing backwaters of the State.



Kottayam and Kozhikode (Calicut)

Kottayam, the 'Land of Lakes, Latex and Letters' is one of the most industrially developed districts of the State and the first fully literate town in the country. It is also referred as the '**Mecca of Publishing Industry.**'



Kozhikode, this charming town of the Malabar coast was the capital of powerful Zamorins. Its natural beauty & prosperity attracted travellers from all over the world. Chinese was the first to establish commercial contact with Kozhikode.



Sabarimala-The Sacred abode of Lord Ayyappa

Sabarimala is one of the most important pilgrim centers of the State. The holy shrine nestles at an altitude of 914 meters in the rugged terrains of Western Ghats, surrounded by dense forests teeming with exotic wildlife species. It is regarded as the third richest temple in India and considering the number of days it is open in a year; the shrine is perhaps the richest. Lord Ayyappa is believed to be the son of Mohini (the female form of Lord Vishnu) and Lord Shiva. Devotees of all religious faiths can worship here, but entry to the shrine is restricted for women between the ages of 10 and 50 years.



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Munnar

Munnar (literally meaning of three rivers) is set at the confluence of three mountain streams- Mudrapuzha, Nallathanni and Kundala. It once the summer capital of the British in South India and still retains an aura of old-world elegance. The beautiful landscape is dotted with lakes, reservoirs, lush forests and sprawling tea estates. Pepper, rubber and cardamom plantations lend a distinct aroma to the cool and bracing climate of the hill resort.



The Venice of the East

The famous backwater in Kerala is known as the 'Venice of the East'. The rivers that pop in and out of the sea have created many lagoons, lakes and canals. A lot of coconut trees are fringed on these canals. There are many houseboats floating along lazily in this backwater and people in those houseboats are enjoying the calm environment.

The entire backwater area is a complex network of large lakes that are connected to each other by canals. The canals are both for tourism and transportation. The water is used for irrigation too. The fresh water from the rivers meets the seawater from the Arabian Sea. But there are actual barriers that don't allow the river water to get salty. The backwaters have some lovely aquatic life that includes unique species of frogs, crabs & mudskippers. There are also water birds like kingfishers, darters & terns.



Food: Meen Peera & Avial

Meen- fish in Malayalam. Meen **Peera** is a yummy dish of fish immersed in a tasty mixture of coconut & fragrant spices. It is a dry dish that people have to eat with kanji (a kind of rice soup)



Avial is a healthy & tasty food with lot of vegetables that are cooked in a delectable mix of coconut & spices. People eat it with rice & sambar.



Karikku Payasam & Appam & Stew

Karikku means tender coconut. Karikku payasam is a delicious pudding made with coconut water and soft coconut flesh- all mixed with milk, sugar & nuts.



Appam & Stew: This hugely popular dish has a touch of Europe in it. Appams are pancakes with a plump centre. And the stew is a delicious coconut-based gravy with either meat or vegetables.



Puttu & Pullisery

Puttu is Kerala's favourite breakfast dish. These little rice cylinders are made of rice flour & coconut. People eat this with a special curry called kadala curry.



Pullisery is a yummy side dish that people make with different vegetables or fruit.



Kootucurry and Snacks

Kootu means mixing up. This dish is made by mixing up lot of pulses with different vegetables, banana, yam & winter melon. It tastes supper with rice.



KERALA
**KOOTU
CURRY**
FOR ONAM SADHYA



Snacks: Kerala's favourite munchies are chips, because there are so many banana & jackfruit trees, people dry the fruits & make delicious chips using them.



Festivals

Pooram



Boat Race



Onam

- In South India, Onam festival is celebrated majorly by the Malyali community of the people of Kerala.
- It is celebrated widely to mark the welcoming of their great king Mahabali
- This 10 days long festival is celebrated with incredible splendor and is also said to mark the beginning of the harvest season.
- The celebrations include cultural parade, making of flower rangolis, traditional folk musical and dance performances boat race, tiger dance and more.



Culture

- Kerala unfolds a vibrant cultural canvas unseen anywhere else in the world. Its rich cultural heritage is very well exhibited in its frenzied tempo of snake boat races, classical dignity of Kathakali, lyrical beauty of Mohiniyattam, martial skills of Kalaripayattu and exquisite workmanship of Kerala handicrafts.
- Kerala has one of the highest literacy rates in India. That is, more people in Kerala are educated than in other states.
- That is, a lovely mix culture that comes from many Christians, Muslims because of the Portuguese, Dutch and Arab influence.
- People in Kerala speak Malayalam. Malayalam is a Dravidian language and the words are sometimes long and hard to pronounce. And the interesting fact is-almost everyone in Kerala can speak and understand English.

Dravidian Martial Art

Kalaripayattu is an ancient martial art form that legends say Sage Parasurama innovated. It is a lot like kung fu, where the combatants draw from the poses and strength of snakes, crocodiles, elephants, wild boars and so on. The martial art form is taught at the Kalari (training school), which are also centres of indigenous medical practices and religious worship. The training starts with oil massage the body agile and supple. The trainees are first made to learn chattom(jump), ottam(running), marichil(somersault) etc, and later on trained in skills of using weapons like daggers, swords, spears, maces, the bow and arrow, wooden poles etc. Finally, the students are given the knowledge of defeating an opponent by applying pressure to nerve points.



Mohiniyattam & Kathakali

Mohiniyattam is a classical dance performed by women. Like Bharatnatyam, there are bits of this dance and facial expressions are important in this dance.



This fascinating dance (**Kathakali**) is usually performed by men. They paint their faces dramatically and wear billowing skirts. The dancers play the role of characters from epics-the Ramayana & the Mahabharata.



Thiruvathirakali & Kolkali

Thiruvathirakali is a fun dance and it is performed during the festival of Onam.



The farming community mainly perform this dance (**Kolkali**)



Traditional Kerala Dress

Women in Kerala traditionally wear something called a *mundum neriyathum*. This basically consists of two pieces of cloth-one draped around the hips, and the other like a sari. The glowing golden border is called a *kara*.

The traditional clothing for men is just as elegant and simple. They too wear a *mundu* (the long cloth) draped around their waist. They wear this with a shirt or a kurta.



Ayurveda

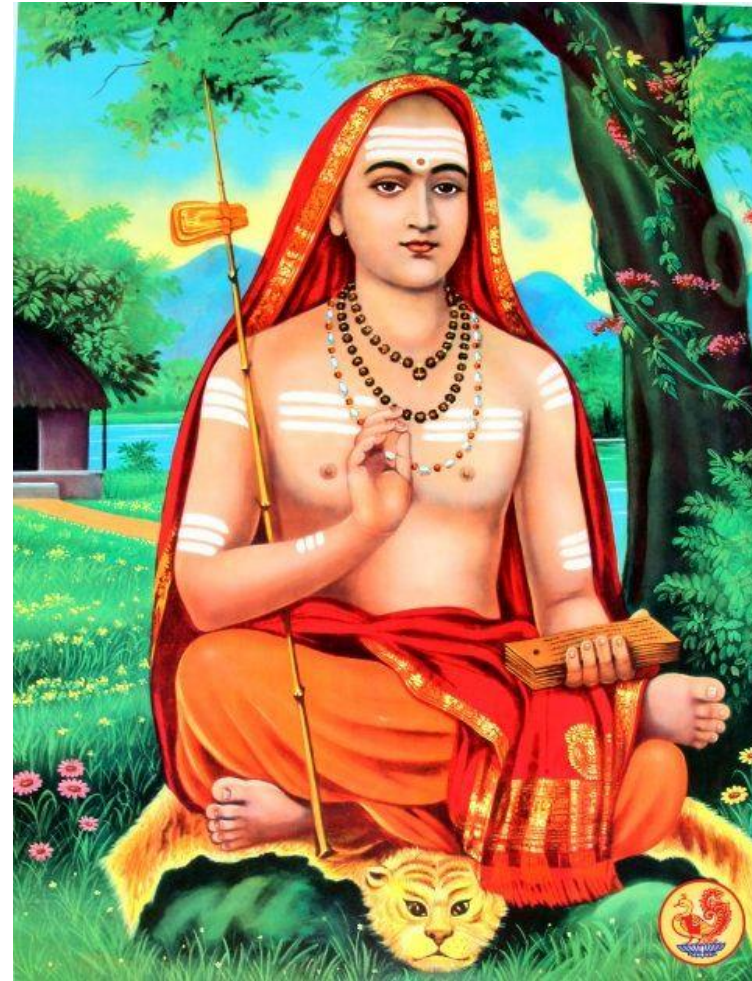
Ayurveda, the ‘Science of Life’ is India’s natural system of medicine. The contribution of Kerala to the theory and practice of Ayurveda is enormous. The celebrated *Astha Vaidyans*, who belonged to the Namboothri community are still active in the field. The Kerala Ayurvedic physicians have earned high reputation in the field. Quality Ayurvedic treatment, including massage with herbal oils, is available at many hotels and resorts in Kerala. The State has emerged as a popular destination for health motivated travellers.



Adi Shankara

Adi Shankara was a great philosopher who believed to have established the base of Hinduism as we know it.

He travelled across India, spreading his philosophy through debates with other thinkers. He has many thousands of disciples who follow his teachings even today.



P.T. Usha

P. T. Usha is the superfast athlete who was known by her nickname also, Payyoli. She took part in the Olympics and has won many medals in various championships.



Thank You