

JOURNEY THROUGH KERALA

DAY 1

Depart London for your flight to Cochin via Dubai.

DAY 2

On arrival in Dubai, stay in transit for your onward flight to Cochin. Please contact the airline staff for any assistance.

On arrival in Cochin, having cleared immigration, collected your luggage and passed through customs, please make your way towards the exit of the terminal building where you will be greeted with a paging board with your name on.

You will then be taken to your hotel, [**BRUNTON BOATYARD**](#), for check in and a two night stay.

Cochin is a city of many parts. Around for a long, long time, Cochin played a pivotal role in the development of shipping and trade in the region.

Cochin prime location on the west coast, its fine bay and protected harbour made it popular with seafarers and merchant ships who made frequent stops to stock up on spices, coffee and wood enroute to the rich markets of Europe and West Asia.

Down the ages, Cochin prospered as a busy port city and commercial centre. Its seafront is still extremely relevant to Cochin and to India. It houses a Naval Base and one of India's busiest ports.

DAY 3

COCHIN

After breakfast, you will proceed for a half day sightseeing tour of Cochin.

We shall begin the tour by visit to the Dutch Palace, also known as Mattancherry Palace. It was built by the Portuguese and presented to the Raja of Kochi in 1555 AD. It acquired the present name after 1663 when the Dutch carried out extensions and repairs in the palace. At no time did the Portuguese or Dutch stay here. Its interiors are decorated with murals from the Ramayana and there are some lively displays of royal costumes and palanquins.

Then visit the Jewish Synagogue, built in 1568 AD. The Great Scrolls of the Old Testament, the copper plates in which the grants of privilege made by the Cochin rulers were recorded and the exquisite Chinese hand-painted tiles are of interest here.

You will also visit St. Francis Church in Fort Cochin. The Protestant church was originally built by the Portuguese in 1510 AD and is believed to be the oldest church built by the Europeans in India. It is here the remains of the inveterate traveller, Vasco-da-Gama were initially buried and 14 years later, his mortal remains were taken to Portugal.

Santa Cruz Baslica Church is also worth visiting. Some beautiful paintings can be seen here.

The Chinese fishing nets that line the sea-front and exhibit a mechanical method of catching fish by local fishermen in Fort Cochin is what you will see on your way while returning to your hotel.

Said to have been brought from China by traders of Kubalai Khan's Court, they are used at high tide.

In the evening, enjoy the Kathakali dance performance.

Kathakali is a highly stylized classical Indian dance-drama noted for the attractive make-up of characters, elaborate costumes, detailed gestures and well-defined body movements presented in tune with the anchor playback music and complementary percussion. It originated in the country's present day state of Kerala during the 17th century and has developed over the years with improved looks, refined gestures and added themes besides more ornate singing and precise drumming.

DAY 4

After breakfast, you will be drive to Munnar.

Tucked away in sunny, tropical Kerala is a cool green paradise, away from heat and dust, state's finest tea plantations. Munnar is the best Hill station of Kerala.

See the spectacular beauty of the Tea gardens and enjoy nature, where the cloud turns into mist.

It is located 1600 metres above sea level and was once the summer resort of the erstwhile British Government in South India.

On arrival you will check in at your hotel, [WINDERMERE ESTATE](#).

The rest of the day will be at leisure.

DAY 5

After breakfast, you will drive to Periyar National Park, in Thekkady.

The drive to Thekkady is enchanting as the road winds through tranquil countryside, rich plantations & thick jungles.

An important tourist attraction in the Kerala, the Periyar Wildlife sanctuary is spread across 777 km² (300 sq. miles), of which 360 km² (139 sq. miles) is thick evergreen forest. This Wild Life Sanctuary was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1978. The splendid artificial lake formed by the Mulla Periyar Dam across the Periyar River adds to the charm of the park. The greatest attraction of Periyar is the herds of wild elephants that come down to play in the lake.

Thekkady is also considered a heaven for natural spices such as black pepper, cardamom, cinnamon and clove.

On arrival, you will check-in at your hotel, [SPICE VILLAGE](#).

In the afternoon you will enjoy a walk in the spice plantation. The spice plantation in Thekkady is a prime attraction of this beautiful land. Though sprawling tea estates cover much of the landscape of Thekkady, plantations of cardamom, rubber, vanilla and coffee are also aplenty. Walk amidst the green, terraced farms of the various spices and breathe in the fragrant air while exploring the spice plantations.

Pick up a few packets of the tea and spices grown here that make for a good buy. There are various kinds of spices cultivated in Thekkady. The most abundantly found spice in Thekkady is

pepper. But there is a variety of cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, ginger, turmeric and curry leaves on the slanting slopes of the spice plantation in Thekkady.

DAY 6

After breakfast, you will drive to Kumarakom.

Kumarakom is Kerala's heartland of lagoons, palm fringed lakes and paddy fields, inter-linked with hundreds of winding canals, and with the typical low slung country boats that carry everything from people to fish, rice and coconuts to the milkman and newspaper boy, local politicians and priests to wedding parties.

On arrival, you will check-in at your hotel, [COCONUT LAGOON](#), for a two night stay.

In the afternoon, you are at leisure to relax or pursue independent activities.

DAY 7

KUMARAKOM

After breakfast, the day is at leisure to pursue independent activities, or relax.

Optional tours:

- Village Visit - Aymanam is a small village in Kottayam District of Kerala. Visit by road the God of small things famed Aymanam village. Cruise in an open canoe through Meenachil river. Meet a Kathakaly master who will explain various act and dance. Walk through nature. Watch small things. The village borders Lake Vembanad on the west, near Kumarakom. Two-thirds of Aymanam consists of rice fields.
- Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary – Home to different species of birds, including migratory birds from Siberia, this 14 acre sanctuary was established by the Government for preserving coconut trees and mandrakes, the natural habitat of birds. Popular birds include the water duck, waterfowl, owl, heron, egret, cuckoo and Siberian cranes. You can also see kingfishers, paradise fly catchers and golden backed woodpeckers. Birdwatching can be enjoyed by hiring houseboats and motor boats on Vembanad Lake. On site is also a Baker's Mansion, over 50 years old.
- Aruvikkuzhi Waterfalls - A mud path from Kumarakom leads to Aruvikkuzhi waterfalls. At the end of this 2 km trail is the waterfall, which is a popular sightseeing spot. Small yet pretty, the waterfall is inviting enough for a short break of a couple of hours or even a half day picnic. The green backdrop of rubber plantations around is complemented by the sparkle of meandering streams. Birds fly over nearby plantations as well as wetlands.

DAY 8

After breakfast you will be at leisure until you will embark for your house-boat, which you will stay on overnight.

Kettuvallams, the stitched boats provide the best way to experience the colourful backwaters of Kerala.

The wood commonly used to make Kettuvallams is 'Anhili', which is found in abundance in central Travancore area. Large planks are tied together using handmade coir ropes and beaten coconut fibres. This gives the Kettuvallams enough strength to withstand heavy waves in the sea. Kettuvallams are built entirely without the use of nails.

It requires great skill and adroitness to construct these giant boats by tying huge planks of jack wood together. The boats are applied with fish oil and cashew nut oil and left to cure for days. With careful maintenance, they last for generations.

These house boats are available in all sizes and shapes, and comprise one or two bedrooms with attached bathrooms, one living room, kitchenette, an open lounge, deck and a crew comprising oarsmen, a cook and guide.

The houseboats are generally powered by a small outboard engine, allowing one to cruise along the backwaters.

A sojourn in Kettuvallam, the House boat of Kerala, offers a panoramic view of one of the most picturesque aspects of the God's Own Country.

You will cruise through the palm-fringed backwaters, throughout a night in waxing moonlights.

All meals will be served on board the house-boat.

DAY 9

After breakfast, you will disembark the houseboat and drive to Marari.

On arrival, you will check in at your hotel, [**MARARI BEACH RESORT**](#) for a three night stay.

Marari 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.

Modelled on the fishermen's dwellings of Mararikulam, your accommodations are a fine balance between traditional form and modern function. The roof is palm, but a concrete base has been added that keeps the air-conditioning in and the odd insect out. Bathrooms too, combine modern fixtures with the traditional Kerala open-roofed style. And the little taps outside each cottage are another local touch. The fisher folk use them to clean the sand off their feet, and you can do likewise. Barefoot is a great way to be at Marari Beach, even indoors.

Rest of the day is at leisure to relax or pursue independent activities.

DAYS 10 AND 11

After breakfast you will be at leisure to relax or peruse independent activities.

Options tours:

- Coir Factory – See the coir manufacturing process from the coconut husk to the final rope / coir yarn stage. There are also several shops selling coir matting and carpets.
- Visit to Alleppey Town – Explore local markets and interact with people.
- Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary – Home to different species of birds, including migratory birds from Siberia, this 14 acre sanctuary was established by the Government for

preserving coconut trees and mandrakes, the natural habitat of birds. Popular birds include the water duck, waterfowl, owl, heron, egret, cuckoo and Siberian cranes. You can also see kingfishers, paradise fly catchers and golden backed woodpeckers. Birdwatching can be enjoyed by hiring houseboats and motor boats on Vembanad Lake. On site is also a Baker's Mansion, over 50 years old.

- Day Cruise On Houseboat

DAY 12

Breakfast, tea and coffee at the hotel before you are transferred to Cochin airport to board your flight for London via Dubai.