

## BACKWATERS PARADISE

**Cochin \* Thekkady (Periyar) \* Kumarakom \* Mararikulam \* Cochin**

### **DAY - 1 ARRIVE: COCHIN**

**BY: FLIGHT**

Arrival at Cochin Airport, upon arrival a ground agent will meet you at the airport and transfer you to hotel.

Kochi, or more familiarly, Cochin is a city of many parts. Around for a long, long time, Kochi played a pivotal role in the development of shipping and trade in the region. Kochi's 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. And so down the ages, Kochi 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. Its twin city, Ernakulam, is an important railhead and industrial centre.

Cochin's history is a bright tapestry - many coloured threads woven through centuries together present the fabric of the present. Its involvement with the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British are evident in the architecture of city buildings, the old durbar hall is the spice in the dish! Modern day Kochi may be a busy port and shipping centre but it has many attractions for ordinary tourists.

Kochi's location between the blue, blue waters of the Arabian Sea and Kerala's emerald backwaters, its rich medley of Indian and foreign architecture, its truly unusual sights like the Chinese fishing nets and its quaint quiet localities like the Jewish Quarters demand the attention of all who travel to Kerala. Cochin's Jewish Quarter is another story - the ancestors of Cochin's Jews came here two thousand years ago, got involved in the spice trade, prospered and stayed back to build a new life free from religious persecution. Sadly, the population dwindled significantly with immigration to Israel and the few families that still live here struggle to maintain their cultural heritage like the beautiful Synagogue.

**Arrive at hotel and proceed for check in. Overnight at the hotel**

### **DAY 2 COCHIN**

After a leisurely buffet breakfast at the hotel, you will proceed for a half-day sightseeing tour of Cochin visit Chinese Fishing Nets - The Chinese Fishing net that line the sea-front and exhibit a mechanical method of catching fish by local fishermen in Fort Kochi. Said to have been brought from China by traders of Kubalai Khan's Court, they are used at high tide. Dutch Palace, Jewish Synagogue, Chinese Fishing net, ST. Francis Church & Museum of Kerala History.

Dutch Palace (Closed on Fridays and Public Holidays) is also known as Mattancherry Palace built by the Portuguese and presented to the Raja of Cochin 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. (Closed on Fridays and national holidays)

Jewish Synagogue (Closed on Fridays, Saturdays and Jewish Holidays) was 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

St. Francis Church - 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 Gamma were initially buried and 14 years later, his mortal remains were taken to Portugal.

Bolghatty Palace is situated in Bolghatty Island a narrow palm fringed Island easily accessible from the mainland. The Palace was built by the Dutch in 1744. Later, it became the seat of the British Resident and today this has been converted into a hotel run by KTDC.

In the evening, you will be taken to a Kathakali dance center where you will witness the most elaborate of the dance forms in southern India. Here you will witness the artists readying themselves up with the make up for the final performance.

Kerala owes its transnational fame to this nearly 300 years old classical dance form, which combines facets of ballet, opera, masque and the pantomime. It is said to have evolved from other performing arts like *Kootiyattam*, *Krishnanattam* and *Kalarippayattu*. *Kathakali* explicates ideas and stories from the Indian epics and Puranas. Presented in the temple precincts after dusk falls *Kathakali* is heralded by the *Kelikottu* or the beating of drums in accompaniment of the *Chengila* (gong). The riches of a happy blending of color, expressions, music, drama and dance are unparalleled in any other art form.

Costume is elaborate with the face painted up. Great importance is laid on the *Vesham* or make-up, which are of five types - *Pacha*, *Kathi*, *Thadi*, *Kari* and *Minukku*. The pomp and magnificence of *Kathakali* is partly due to its decor part of which is the *kireetam* or huge headgear and the *kanchukam* the over sized jackets, and a long skirt worn over a thick padding of cushions. The identity of the actor is completely mutilated to create a super human being of larger-than-life proportion. Overnight at the hotel

### DAY 3 COCHIN - THEKKADY

After buffet breakfast at the hotel you would be driven from Cochin to Thekkady, which is also known as Periyar (195 KMS / 4 Hours).

Upon arrival, proceed for check-in at your hotel.

Afternoon proceed to Periyar National Park to view the wildlife by boats. Set in the heart of the Cardamom Hills of Kerala the Periyar National Park and Tiger Reserve, offers a rare opportunity to enjoy South India's wild life and beauty. The park has a picturesque lake at the heart of the sanctuary. Herds of elephant and sambar, gaur and wild pigs and wander down to the lakeside and can be observed from the launches that cruise the

lake. Periyar also harbours the leopard, wild dog, barking deer and mouse deer. On the rocky outcrops along the lake, monitor lizards can be seen basking in the sun.

Return to the hotel after safari.

Evening free to explore local spice gardens & market. Overnight at the hotel

#### **DAY 4 THEKKADY - KUMARAKOM**

After buffet breakfast at the hotel, you will be driven to Kumarakom (120 Kms / 3 Hrs), which is located on the shores of the enchanting Vembanad lake.

Upon arrival in Kumarakom, proceed for check-in at your hotel.

It is a beautiful town situated in the hills and is surrounded by some of the most fertile and beautiful scenery in the state with serene palm-fringed backwaters on the west and the Western Ghats on the east.

Afternoon free to relax at this backwater paradise. Overnight at the hotel

#### **DAY 5 HOUSEBOAT**

Following buffet breakfast morning is at leisure. Afternoon you will embark on a Houseboat A sojourn in Kettuvallams, the House boats of Kerala, offers a panoramic view of one of the most picturesque aspects of the God's Own Country. One can cruise in it through the palm-fringed backwaters, throughout a night in waxing moonlights. The lullaby of the waves and the dazzling delights of the moonlit night can be experienced by spending a couple of nights aboard the Kettuvallam. The traditional houseboat of Kerala is one of the most enduring images of the backwaters. These houseboats are converted version of the "Kuttanadan Kettuvallams".

An onboard chef will be at your service. He will prepare local cuisines for you and you can also learn the same.

*Note: Houseboat sails during daytime only and anchors whole night at the jetty. The air-conditioners work in night only. The standard check-in time is 1400 hours and check-out time is 0900 hours. Overnight onboard houseboat*

#### **DAY 6 HOUSEBOAT - MARARIKULAM**

After breakfast disembark houseboat and drive to Mararikulam, upon arrival check-in at Marari beach resort.

Mararikulam is a sleepy fishing village located between the port city of Cochin and Alleppey. And here, amidst the coconut groves is the Marari Resort. Like the other resorts in this hotel chain viz Spice Village, Coconut Lagoon etc, Marari Beach Resort is also constructed with a strong ethnic flavour. It has 48 cottages and 3 cottages with private swimming pools. The restaurant serves delectable fare, both Indian and Continental, there is a large swimming pool also on location. Overnight at the hotel

**DAY 7            MARARIKULAM**

Buffet breakfast at hotel. Rest of the day free at leisure or ayurvedic massages can be taken on direct payment in consultation with doctor (ON DIRECT PAYMENT BASIS).

Overnight at the hotel

**DAY 8            MARARIKULAM – COCHIN – DEPARTURE**

After breakfast at hotel you will be transferred to Cochin airport to connect flight for onward destination.