



Kerala

Includes ➔

Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum)	944
Varkala.....	954
Alappuzha (Alleppey).....	961
The Western Ghats....	969
Munnar	973
Kochi (Cochin)	977
Thrissur (Trichur).....	991
Lakshadweep	1001

Best Wildlife-Watching

- ➔ Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (p996)
- ➔ Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary (p990)
- ➔ Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary (p969)
- ➔ Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary (p949)
- ➔ Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary (p976)

Best Homestays

- ➔ Green Woods Bethlehem (p982)
- ➔ Cherukara Nest (p964)
- ➔ Tranquil (p998)
- ➔ Graceful Homestay (p947)
- ➔ Reds Residency (p983)

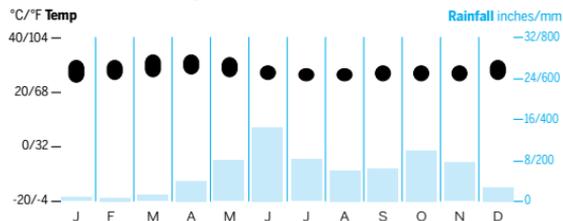
Why Go?

A sliver of a state in India's deep south, Kerala is shaped by its landscape – almost 600km of glorious Arabian Sea coast and beaches, a languid network of backwaters and the spice and tea-covered hills of the Western Ghats. As relaxing as an ayurvedic massage, just setting foot on this swath of soul-quenching green will slow your stride to a blissed-out amble. Kerala is a world away from the frenzy of elsewhere, as if India had passed through the Looking Glass and become an altogether more laid-back place.

Besides its famous backwaters, rice paddies, coconut groves, elegant houseboats and delicately spiced, taste-bud-tongling cuisine, Kerala is home to wild elephants, exotic birds and the odd tiger; and crazily vibrant traditions such as Kathakali plays and snake-boat races. Few visitors neglect to put Kerala on a South India itinerary – the biggest problem is choosing where to linger the longest.

When to Go

Thiruvananthapuram



Jan–Feb Perfect beach and back-water weather. Ernakulathappan Utsavam festival in Kochi (Cochin).

Apr Kathakali at Kottayam and Kollam festivals, and the elephant procession in Thrissur.

Aug–Sep End of the monsoon period: Onam festival, snake-boat races.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), Kozhikode (Calicut) and Kochi (Cochin) are Kerala's air and rail transport hubs.

Fast Facts

- **Population:** 33.34 million
- **Area:** 38,864 sq km
- **Capital:** Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum)
- **Main Language:** Malayalam
- **Sleeping Prices:** \$ below ₹1000, \$\$ ₹1000 to ₹3500, \$\$\$ above ₹3500

Planning Your Trip

High season in the backwaters and beach resorts is around November to March; between mid-December and mid-January prices creep up further. There are great deals during the monsoon (June to September).

Resources

- **Kerala Tourism** (www.keralatourism.org) Kerala's official tourism site.
- **Manorama Online** (www.manoramaonline.com) Local newspaper with an online English edition.
- **Kerala.com** (www.kerala.com) News, tourism and loads of links.
- **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/india/kerala) Planning advice, reviews, recommendations and insider tips.

Food

Delicious South Indian breakfast dishes include *puttu* (steamed rice powder and coconut), *idlis* (spongy, round, fermented rice cakes), *sambar* (fragrant vegetable dhal), and dosas with coconut chutney.

Kerala's spice plantations, coconut-palm groves and long coastline shape the local cuisine, with deliciously delicate dishes such as fish *molee* or the spicy Malabar chicken curry. Fresh seafood, such as pomfret, kingfish and prawns, can be bought from fishing boats along the coast.

For dessert, *payasam* is made of brown molasses, coconut milk and spices, garnished with cashew nuts and raisins.

DON'T MISS

Fort Cochin is an extraordinary town, resonant with 500 years of colonial history. There are few more magical experiences than floating along **Kerala's backwaters** on a houseboat, canoe or even a kayak. For a true Keralan family welcome, try spending the night in a **homestay**, where you can eat (and cook) with the family.

Top State Festivals

- **Ernakulathappan Utsavam** (☺ Jan/Feb, Shiva Temple, Ernakulam, Kochi, p981) Eight days of festivities culminating in a parade of elephants, music and fireworks.
- **Thirunakkara Utsavam** (☺ Mar, Thirunakkara Shiva Temple, Kottayam, p966) All-night Kathakali dancing on the third and fourth nights of this 10-day festival.
- **Kollam Pooram** (☺ Apr, Asraman Shri Krishna Swami Temple, Kollam, p959) A 10-day festival with all-night Kathakali performances and a procession of 40 ornamented elephants.
- **Thrissur Pooram** (☺ Apr/May, Vadakkunathan Kshetram Temple, Thrissur, p991) The elephant procession to end all elephant processions.
- **Nehru Trophy Snake Boat Race** (☺ 2nd Sat in Aug, Alappuzha, p959) The most popular of Kerala's boat races.
- **Onam** (☺ Aug/Sep, statewide) Kerala's biggest cultural celebration, when the entire state celebrates the golden age of mythical King Mahabali for 10 days.