



# Kerala

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Villa Maya (p261)
- ➔ Dal Roti (p307)
- ➔ Bait (p274)
- ➔ Malabar Junction (p307)
- ➔ Paragon Restaurant (p315)

## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Green Woods Bethlehem (p303)
- ➔ Varnam Homestay (p319)
- ➔ Kaiya House (p277)
- ➔ Ashtamudi Villas (p281)
- ➔ Reds Residency (p303)

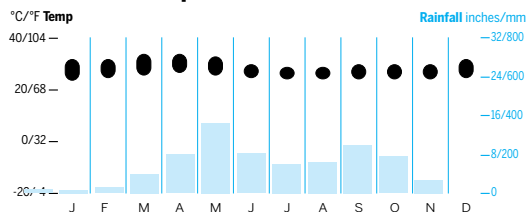
## Why Go?

For many travellers, Kerala is South India's most serenely beautiful state. A slender coastal strip is shaped by its layered landscape: almost 600km of glorious Arabian Sea coast and beaches; a languid network of glistening backwaters; and the spice- and tea-covered hills of the Western Ghats. Just setting foot on this swath of soul-quenching, palm-shaded green will slow your subcontinental 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, elegant houseboats, ayurvedic treatments and delicately spiced, taste-bud-tlingling cuisine, Kerala is home to wild elephants, exotic birds and the odd tiger, while vibrant traditions such as Kathakali plays, temple festivals and snake-boat races frequently bring even the smallest villages to life. It's hard to deny Kerala's liberal use of the slogan 'God's Own Country'.

## When to Go

### Thiruvananthapuram



**Dec–Feb** Perfect beach and backwater weather. Festival season throughout the state.

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

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



## Kerala Highlights

- 1 Backwaters** (p286)  
Cruising in a houseboat or punted canoe from Alappuzha, Kollam or Kumarakom.
- 2 Wayanad** (p317) Spotting wild elephants, trekking and relaxing in remote forest accommodation.
- 3 Varkala** (p275) Watching

the days slip-slide away at this cliff-top beach resort.

- 4 Munnar** (p294) Bedding down in a beautifully remote resort and trekking through emerald tea plantations.
- 5 Fort Cochin** (p299) Feeling the history and dining with a local family in a homestay.

- 6 Kathakali** (p312) Experiencing a performance in Kochi.

**7 Matha Amrithanandamayi Mission** (p282) Calling in for a cuddle at the ashram of Amma, in Amrithapuri.

- 8 Kannur** (p320) Exploring unspoilt beaches and *theyyam* rituals in the north.