

KERALA: ART, SPICE AND SUSTAINABILITY INCLUDING THE KOCHI BIENNALE



This unique experience takes us through 3 interesting destinations in Kerala: **Athirapally**, on the banks of Chalakudy river, **Puthenvelikkara**, known for the confluence of Chalakudy and Periyar rivers and **Fort Kochi**, the island closer to the estuary where the Periyar river joins the Arabian sea. Rivers that nurtured cultural richness and biodiversity, rivers and tides that created lands through its ebb and flow. You will get an insight into the lives of forest people and their stewardship that preserves the nature around us. The trip takes you through the colonial period and contemporary challenges on conservation. You will understand about people's movements that defined the character of the society in Kerala, meet innovators who are sustaining the changes. From women entrepreneurs to artists who are finding their feet to build resilient communities around them, this journey will be an eye opener for you.

This is a journey that could change perspectives, where the journey becomes a transformative experience.



Highlights



- Gain an an insight into the lives of forest people
- Journey through colonial period and contemporary challenges on conservation
- Interact with innovators who are sustaining climate & social change
- Learn about one of the first Climate Change Resistant Food initiatives in India
- Enjoy unique culinary experiences
- A special curated walk of the Kochi Biennale 22-23



ITINERARY

DAY 1: 22 Jan 2023 Arrival in Kochi; Transfer to Athirappaly

Arrival at Cochin International Airport, world's first 100% solar energy dependent airport.

Transfer to Athirappilly will be arranged for you depending on your flight timings. (40KMS : / Aprpx 75 minutes)

Check in at the hotel and a short walk to Athirappaly Water Falls.

Like how Lion Tailed Macaque (LTM) became a mascot for Save Silent Valley Movement in the past, Athirappilly waterfall has become a powerful mascot for many environmental movements that came up to protect Chaliyar river. While you enjoy the **mesmerizing view of the waterfalls and river**, our **story tellers** will give you insight into the people's initiative movements to **preserve the river, its biodiversity and its indigenous people**.

We leave for dinner around 5 pm, at **Rasa Gurukula**. Rasa Gurukul, the village resort set on the Chalakudy river, is a quaint place to unwind and reflect upon. The place gives you access to their paddy field, village lifestyle in the most authentic way possible.

Options to learn traditional South Indian dishes, and explore the paddy fields while interacting with the resident masons and blacksmiths who practice their craft in the campus. You are welcome to join the chefs in the open and inviting kitchen, to learn a recipe or two.

You will be booked at **Niraamaya / Rainforest** or similar for a stay of 2 nights.

DAY 2: 23 Jan 2023 Athirappaly Waterfalls and Forest Foragers Experience

Post breakfast, we visit Vazhachal Forest Trail where we **will interact with the forest dependent communities** along the Chaliyar and Karuvannur river basins. The trails through the buffer zones will give insights into the lives of forest people and how based on seasonality they use forest products for subsistence. These minor forest products they gather are now linked to their livelihood and you will be interacting with women social entrepreneurs who are involved in creating value added products ranging from beeswax skin care, wild food and bamboo crafts.

This trip gives **an opportunity to understand how seasonality and sustainability are intertwined** and how harvest is possible without exploiting nature. The forager's way of life is awe-inspiring and humbling at the same time. In tune with the changing seasons and bounties, learning to be patient even when resources are scarce. A **community lunch with the women**, using locally and seasonally available food.

Post lunch, we drive through the **forests leading to Valparai**. This is a drive to enjoy the scenery and wilderness. There are NO stops allowed within the one-hour journey as it's a **drive through the protected sanctuary**. After a short break for a view of Peringalkuthu dam with tea and local snacks, we drive back to the property.



Dinner at the hotel. Overnight at Niraamaya / Rainforest or similar

DAY 3: 24 Jan 2023 - POKKALI – The Story of a Rice and Chinese fishing nets

55 KMS 1hr 30 mins duration approx.

Post breakfast, transfer to **Puthenvelikkara**. Puthan-veli-akkara is a **unique village** in many ways.

Land evolved out of centuries of high tide and some of the great floods is an ideal place to understand people's movement towards Climate Resilience. Village that forms part of Muziris Heritage, has centuries of historic relationships with Jewish traders and settlers. In local parlance, the name of the village refers to it as a newly formed land mass, referring to past floods. As it is covered by rivers and lagoons, the riverscape offers unique fish varieties and locals are known for their skills in wild fishing.

Before the lunch, you will **interact with local leaders who are involved in running the community resource centers** who have set up weather stations that help them **pursue Climate Resilient Agricultural practices**. This will involve guests documenting the rainfall data along with locals, an activity that can be replicated in their home base.

Transfer to **Ezhikkara village** for lunch at the initiative called **Pokkali -The Story of a Rice**. One of the first known Climate Change Resistant Food initiatives in India, this farm to table initiative brings you closer to the communities where you can **cook along with the local and enjoy the meal at a scenic location**. Most of the food including vegetables, fishes and rice will be sourced from the village itself.



POKKALI – The Story of a Rice is a unique community-based initiative to preserve and conserve a one of its kind, the saline-tolerant strain of rice, threatened by extinction. In a stunning backwater setting, this tour gives an opportunity to understand one of the oldest known crops cultivated through a symbiotic farming tradition. It's known for its tolerance to salinity and hence positioned as a climate change resistant food. The day excursion's highlight involves interaction with farmers and community leaders who sustain the tradition against many constraints. This trip also gives an insight into sustainable prawn culture and visits to other organic farms. Involves activities like organic farm visit, culinary trail, lunch with farmers, and a country boat cruise circumnavigating the island.

Post lunch **board the country boat** to see the western side of the island filled with hundreds of Chinese fishing nets. You will get an **opportunity to fish with farmers and enjoy a proper sit-down meal** on top of one of the Chinese fishing nets platforms after sunset.

(Nobody will go hungry even if they have not caught their fish. There would be a dinner option for vegetarians!)

Transfer back to the property.

Stay 2 nights at **Cranganor History Café & Riverside Château** or similar

DAY 4: 25 Jan 2023 - Heritage Walk / Boat ride through Muziris/ Chekuttu Dolls

Muziris was an ancient seaport and urban center on Malabar Coast that dates from at least 1 century BC. The port was key to trade between Chinese, Persians, Phoenicians and the Roman Empire. In recent years, Kerala Government has taken initiative to excavate places around Kodungallur North of Kochi and is an interesting site to visit for it's secular credentials. **Probably one of the few places where one can visit Temples, Mosques, Churches and Synagogues in a small vicinity.** Traditional Markets and Textile cottage industry are still active in the region.

We explore this heritage on foot, and water taxis post breakfast.



Today lunch is at **Palaaram, a small family run eatery in Chendamangalam, known for its weaving tradition.** The food is predominantly cooked using family recipes mostly from the malabar (north Kerala) region.

Chendamangalam and Puthenvelikkara village had gone through the onslaughts of many floods in the past and the last being 2018 and 2019. It was also a great opportunity for people to innovate and create initiatives as a beacon of Resilience, including the making of a little doll called Chekutty, that became a sensation during the post flood recovery.

Join local weavers who will show you how to make these dolls, at leisure while you are resting at the resort by the water. You are welcome to buy those dolls they make as a part of a pay as you wish program, contributions of which will go into the women run co-operative.

The Day will conclude with a brief trip to the nearby sandbanks **to witness sunset and hear more local stories.** Maybe try some of the local palm-toddy freshly brought from the coconut tree nearby.

Tonight, a special dance performance (Optional @ Rs 2500 pp subject to a minimum of 10 guests)

Post sunset, there is an option to go and watch 'Chavittu Nadakam' a unique performing art that shows the cultural richness of the communities living in the village. Chavittu Naatakam is a folk art form also considered the Christian counterpart of the famed Kathakali and is essentially a musical dance drama. Watch a Chavittu Nadakom performance and understand the nuances and intricacies of the art form where the actors have to be equally good singers, dancers. Though the art form is devoid of a single prose, the actors sing while they act and take steps. The elaborate footwork of the art is what lends it the name Chavittu Natakam - Chavittu meaning steps and nadakom meaning drama. Learn a bit

about why this art form is prevalent in the coastal areas where the Portuguese had their stronghold and how this art was in fact influenced by other existing folk arts like Kathakali, thootha, Kaliyattam etc. The chief musical instruments used are the heavy forceful chenda(drum) and elathalam(cymbals)

Dinner at the hotel.

Overnight at Cranganor History Café & Riverside Château or similar

DAY 5: 26 Jan 2023 - Kochi Muziris Biennale

35 KMS 1hr 15 mins duration approx.

Post an early breakfast we transfer to **Fort Kochi** where a **curated walk of the Kochi Muziris Biennale** awaits us.

The Kochi-Muziris Biennale seeks to create a new language of cosmopolitanism and modernity that is rooted in the lived and living experience of this old trading port, which, for more than six centuries, has been a crucible of numerous communal identities. Kochi is among the few cities in India where pre-colonial traditions of cultural pluralism continue to flourish. These traditions pre-date the post-Enlightenment ideas of cultural pluralism, globalisation and multiculturalism. They can be traced to Muziris, the ancient city that was buried under layers of mud and mythology after a massive flood in the 14 th century.

*The 2022 - 2023 edition of Biennale is to be curated by artist and writer Shubigi Rao, the theme of the forthcoming Biennale is “**In Our Veins Flow Ink and Fire**”. In the curatorial note, Rao envisioned that the Biennale would embody “the joy of experiencing practices of divergent sensibilities, under conditions both joyful and grim. There is optimism even in the darkest absurdity, and this is what leaves the direness of our time”.*

We will have lunch together at a local restaurant / café.

Post lunch, the afternoon is at leisure so you may **explore the exhibits of the Biennale on your own.**

Later this evening, **experience a special dinner** on the pier at Fort House, Calvathy road, where you may interact with an artist/artists and share your views on the art world.



Stay 2 nights at **Fort House** or similar

DAY 6: 27 Jan 2023- Fort Kochi Heritage walk | Kochi Biennale

Early morning stroll through the lanes of Kochi and enjoy a heritage walk.

FORT KOCHI & MATTANCHERRY are twin cities that is a cultural cauldron. From the Arabs, Chinese, Portuguese, English, Dutch amongst others, both places have seen many foreign and colonial influences on its people and places. Language, food habits, architecture, and its history, has been influenced by the traders and administrators from this culture. Known for its openness and hospitality, Fort Kochi and Mattancherry is also rich with more than 30 different communities from across India who made this their home. Abandoned spice godowns are now transforming into internationally acclaimed art galleries, and some of the ancient buildings have been converted into conservation projects including some hotels and restaurants.

We will explore this vibrant harbour town with our local expert guide with an eye-opening walk through the area's historic buildings to explore the hidden energies latent in India's past and present artistic traditions.

We will have lunch together at a local restaurant / café.

Post lunch, the afternoon is at leisure so you may further **explore the exhibits on your own.**

Dinner tonight will be specially curated meal of the regional food of Kochi.

We will also experience a **musical trail as a private experience** at one of the heritage houses in the quaint corner of Mattancherry. This exciting lec-dem on traditional percussion of Kerala will conclude with an ensemble performance and a drum circle co-created by guests with the musicians.



Overnight at **Fort House** or similar.

DAY 7: 28 Jan 2023- Departure

The transfer to the airport will be arranged for you. Flight should be booked between 1130 and 1430 hours for the transfer (*Transfers for flights outside of these timings will be at an additional cost*)

Price per person on a twin sharing basis: Rs. 89,900
Single room supplement: Rs. 33,500

Inclusions

- Accommodation in the hotels mentioned in this itinerary for 6 nights
- Airport transfers on arrival in Kochi
- Transportation in a private vehicle to and from Kochi
- All meals from Dinner on Day 1 to Breakfast on Day 7
- English speaking guide
- Services of a tour escort
- Sightseeing as mentioned in the itinerary
- All entrance fees for places mentioned in the itinerary
- The Kochi Biennale experience

Exclusions:

- Airfare to Kochi & back
- Tips to the driver / guide
- Any alcoholic / non alcoholic drinks
- Personal expenses
- Camera fee, porter, laundry
- Evening tea, coffee, snacks, any beverages
- Expenses arising from unexpected circumstances beyond our control.
- Medical or Travel Insurance
- 5% GST

Please note

- Due to government restrictions, we may need to re-plan the itinerary and it may require certain cost adjustments.
- We require a minimum of 10 people to operate the group.



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BOOKINGS AND PAYMENTS

- A deposit of Rs 15,000 per person is payable at the time of booking to block your seat on the tour.
- Balance payment has to be made 30 days prior to the start of the tour
- At the time of making the balance / full payment, please send us a copy of your ID proof (Aadhar Card)

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

1. Payment of the booking deposit constitutes acceptance of our terms and conditions

2. We require a minimum of **10 guests** to operate the tour. In case we do not get the minimum number of guests, the deposit paid will be refunded in full

3. The Balance / Full payment will be collected only when we get the minimum number of guests to operate the tour

4. Cancellation of any reservations are subject to the following conditions:

- o Cancellation effected after paying the booking deposit & within 30 days of start of the tour: Full refund
- o Cancellation effected between 30 and 10 days of start of the tour: An administrative service charge equivalent to the initial booking deposit of Rs 15,000 will be levied*
- o Cancellation effected within 10 days of start of the tour: 100% of the tour cost will be levied as cancellation charges*
- o *Cancellation charges will be waived if the guest can find a replacement person to join the tour
- o No refund will be due after commencement of travel

5. Cancellation due to Covid (prior to the tour): All guests will be required to submit a Covid Negative test report 72 hours prior to the start of the tour. If a guest tests positive, a full refund will be given

6. Cancellation due to Covid (during the tour): In the unfortunate event that the guest tests positive during the tour, there will be no refund due for the remainder of the tour. Any additional costs of hotel quarantine / isolation will be applicable as required and has to be paid directly by the guest to the service providers

7. Cancellation due to state travel restrictions: In the event that the state we are travelling to imposes travel restrictions that makes it difficult to travel, we will refund the entire amount paid for the tour or hold the entire amount as a travel credit to be used for a future tour.

8. Refunds due can take upto 5 weeks to process.