

# Kerala



## Further Links

- Relaxing by a palm-fringed beach.
- Enjoying a houseboat cruise through the Backwaters.
- Watching wildlife in Periyar National Park.
- Attending a Kathkali Performance.
- Exploring the historic streets of Fort Cochin.
- Eating wonderful fresh seafood.

## Situation

Kerala is located in the southwest of India.

## Activities

Relaxing by the beach, watching wildlife, enjoying Ayurvedic spa treatments, taking a houseboat cruise.

Meaning "land of the coconuts", Kerala is the main destination for tourism in Southern India. Kerala has a very different culture, climate and landscape from Northern India, with a long history and its own language. Kerala lies on the main trade routes between Europe and China, and has long established Christian and Jewish communities. The Portuguese, Dutch and British all played an important role in the development of the region before independence, but the state has retained its own unique culture. Kerala is proud of its status as the best educated state in India, with literacy rates over 90%.

Kerala is a long, thin state lying between the mountains of the Western Ghats and the beaches of the Arabian Sea. It is lashed by monsoon rains from June to August making the landscape lush and green. The communities along the coast are linked together by the **Backwaters**, a palm-fringed network of lakes, lagoons, rivers and canals where you can enjoy a relaxing houseboat cruise. Further inland lie the hill towns and tea and spice plantations of **Muniar**, and the wildlife of **Periyar National Park**. The state capital is at **Trivandrum** where there is an international airport close to the beaches of **Kovalam**, but the fascinating city of **Cochin** is the main entrance point for most visitors.

Kerala has its own unique cuisine which is heavily dominated by succulent seafood. Coconuts are a staple of the diet here, along with locally grown spices. Rice is far more common than in North Indian cuisine, and there is a seemingly endless supply of fresh fruits. A visit to a **Kathkali** performance is a must when you

are in Kerala. This is a fascinating mixture of dance, martial arts and religious ritual that is over a thousand years old. The elaborate make-up and costumes are as much a part of the performance as the movement and music. Also, you should find time to treat yourself to an **Ayurvedic Spa**. Ayurvedic Medicine developed in Kerala to treat a variety of complaints, and the massages and aromatic oils are ideal for revitalising a tired body.