

# SOUTHERN TEMPLES OF KERALA 2011

## GOD'S OWN COUNTRY

### THIRUVANANTHAPURAM TO GURUVAYOOR

Tour Code	Duration	Starting date	Charge per head
130 SI B	6 Days	May : 14, Jun: 11, July: 9, Aug: 13, Spt: 10, Oct: 8, Nov: 12, Dec: 10	Rs. 6000/- (With food)

Pazhavangadi Ganapathi Temple , Sreepadmanabhaswami Temple, Attukal Bhahavathy Temple , Padmanabhapuram Palace , Sucheendram , Kanyakumari , Vivekananda Rock ,Devi Kanyakumari Temple , Gandhi Mandapam, Santhigiri Ashram Pothenkode (Lotus temple ) Sivagiri, Sivagiri Sree Narayana guru Samadhi , Amrithapuri (Amrithanandamayi Math), Ochira Prabrahma Moorthi , Haripad Manarasala Temple , Ambalpuzha Sree Krishna Temple , Chakulathukavu Bhagavathy Temple, Triruvalla Sree Vallabha Temple Kottarakkara Ganesh Temple , Panthalam Manikanda Swami Temple, Chengannur Bhagavathy Temple. Arammula Krishna Temple Malyalapuzha Temple, Erumeli Sastha Temple, Pamba Ganapathy Temple ,Pakil Sasta Temple, ( Sabarimala temple for ladies), Kottayam Thirunakkara Temple,Sooryakalady Mana, Ettumanoor Mahadeva Temple Malliyur Ganapathy Temple,Suntemple , Kadathuruthy Mahadeva Temple, Vaikom Mahadeva Temple,Chotanikkara Temple, Tripunithura Poorntayeswara Temple, Kodugaloor Bhagavathy Temple . Triprayar Sree Rama Swami Temple, Koodalmanikyam Bharatha Temple, Thrissur Vadakumnatha Temple, Paramekkavu devi temple, Guruvayoor sreekrishna Temple

#### TOUR ITINERARY

**Day 1 : Saturday:** 8 AM Tour starting from Thiruvananthapuram, Pazhavangadi Ganapathi Temple , Sreepadmanabhaswami Temple,Attukal Bhagavathy Temple , Padmanabhapuram palace , Suchindram , Kanyakumari , Vivekananda Rock ,Devi Kanyakumari Temple , Gandhi Mandapam,Sunset. Night rest in Kanyakumari

**Day 2 : Sunday:** Sunrise , Santhigiri Ashram Pothenkode (Lotus temple ) and journey to Sivagiri, Sivagiri Sree Narayana Guru Samadhi , and journey to Amrithapuri (Amrithanandamayi math), Ochira Parabrahma moorthy, Haripad Mannarasala Temple, Ambalapuzha Sree Krishna Temple, Chakulathukavu Bhagavathy Temple and journey to Changanaseeri . Night rest in changanasserri / Chakulathu kavu

**Day 3 : Monday:** Thiruvalla Sree Vallabha Temple , Chengannur Bhagavathy temple, Pandalam Manikanda Temple , Arammula Krishna Temple , Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple ,

Pakil Sastha Temple( sabarimala temple for ladies), and Journey to Malayalapuzha Bhagavathy Temple . Night rest in Ranni / Erumeli

**Day 4 : Tuesday:** Erumeli Sastha Temple, and journey to Pamba Ganapathy Temple, Kottayam Thirunakkara temple, Sooryakalady mana, Ettumanoor Mahadeva Temple Malliyur Ganapathy Temple, Sun temple , Kadathuruthy Mahadeva Temple, Vaikom Mahadeva Temple, Night rest in Chottanikara

**Day 5: Wednesday:** Chottanikara Temple, Thripunithura Poornatrayeesa Temple, Kodungallur Bhagavathy Temple . Tripayar Sree Rama Swami Temple, Koodalmanikyam Bharatha Temple, Thrissur Vadakumnatha temple, Paramekkavu devi temple, Guruvayoor sreekrishna temple, Night rest in Guruvayur.

**Day 6: Thursday :** Tour Ends at Guruvayoor

The passengers from north Kerala can travel by train or Daily service bus to Thiruvananthapuram and join the tour there.

The passengers who are from outside Kerala can arrive at Trivandrum in the early morning of the tour starting date or one day before.

### **Package includes**

Cost of all road transportation , vegetarian food as per the tour schedule , Tour manager and Hotel accommodation on twin sharing basis.

### **Package Excludes**

- Charges for Personal Poojas , entry tickets where-ever necessary and all other personal expenses

**Special Offer :** One passenger will be offered free tickets for every 11<sup>th</sup> passenger in a group . They should book before 30 days of the tour starting date.

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- From Mangalore – Trivandrum express is running every day from Mangalore
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- The passengers can book their Railway tickets three days before the tour starting date (Wednesday)

- From Mumbai Nethravathy express is running every day from Mumbai
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- Luxury Coach night services are running to Trivandrum every day from Bangalore
- From Chennai - Chennai – Trivandrum mail and other express trains are running every day from Chennai
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### [Pazhavangadi Ganapathi Temple in Trivandrum, Kerala](#)

Pazhavangadi Maha Ganapathi Temple is one of the most famous Lord Ganesh temples in Kerala, situated at East Fort, Thiruvananthapuram. Located in the heart of Trivandrum city, the original idol of the Pazhavangadi Ganapathy Temple is a small idol

of Lord Ganesh, with the right leg in the folded posture. Pazhavangadi Ganapati Temple is one of the main [temples in Thiruvananthapuram](#). The temple is situated within walking distance from [Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple of Lord Vishnu](#).

Other deities worshiped at Pazhavangadi Maha Ganapati Kovil are Lord Ayyappa, Goddess Durga, Nagaraja, and Brahmarakshas. Devotees can see beautiful paintings of the [32 forms of Lord Ganesh](#) inside the temple complex.

### **Pzhavangadi Temple History**

The original Ganesha idol installed in the temple was worshiped by a soldier of Travancore Army stationed at Padmanabhapuram. In 1795 A.D, when the capital of Travancore was changed to Thiruvananthapuram, the garrison was also shifted and the idol was installed at its present place at Pazhavangadi.

### **Offerings to Lord Ganesh**

The main vazhipadu (offering) of Pazhavangadi Maha Ganapati is the breaking of coconut for removing obstacles and fulfillment of any desire. Ganapathi Homam, Appam, and Modakam are other main offerings to Lord Ganesh.

### **Festivals Celebrated at Pazhavangadi Ganesh Temple**

[Vinayaka Chaturthi \(Ganesh Chaturthi\)](#), Ganesh Jayanthi, Varad Chaturthi, and [Sankashti Chaturthi](#) are the main festivals in Pazhavangadi Maha Ganapathy Temple. Special poojas (pujas) are performed for other Hindu festivals including [Thiruvonam](#), Vijaya Dasami, Ayilyam, Sahasra Kalasam, Thirkkarththika, Thirvathira, [Makara Vilakku](#), [Maha Shivaratri](#), [Vishu](#), Thriveda Laksharcchana, and Nira Puththari.

### **Temple Dress Code**

To enter inside the main complex male devotees need to wear Mundu (Veshti or Dothi or Laacha). Any traditional dress code like Saree, Churidar, Salwar Kameez, or Pavadai Chattai is allowed for ladies.

## **Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple**

In older days Sree Padmanabha Kshetram and its properties were controlled by powerful lords known as [Ettuveetil Pillamar](#) under the guidance of [Ettara Yogam](#). Later, Marthanda Varma defeated the Pillamar and his cousins "Kunju thampis", took over power.

The last major renovation of the temple was done by King [Marthanda Varma](#), [Maharaja](#) of the erstwhile [princely state](#) of [Travancore](#). He dedicated his kingdom to the deity, and pledged that he and his descendants would serve the kingdom as *Padmanabha Dasa*, meaning "servants of the Lord Padmanabha". With this, Sri Padmanabha became the nominal head of the state of Travancore, assuming the title Perumal, the Emperor. The British Government saluted the Lord with a [21-gun salute](#), a military tradition of colonial days, which was continued by the [Indian Army](#) until the abolition of the privy purses by Government of India with Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister.<sup>[2]</sup>

The royal insignia of the Lord, The *Valampiri* [Shankhu](#) or dextral conch-shell, served as the State emblem of Travancore and even continued so for some time after the re-organization of the States. Sri Padmanabha is still regarded as regional deity of Travancore<sup>[citation needed]</sup>. The two annual festivals of the Temple culminate in a grand procession, in which the three deities (Sree Padmanabha, [Narasimha](#) Swamy and [Krishna](#)) are carried on flower-deck and aesthetically decorated [Garuda](#) Vahanas to the Shankhumukhom beach, for 'aaraattu' (sacramental ablution). The 'aaraattu' days are declared as local public holidays in [Thiruvananthapuram](#). The Idol is made of Kadusarkara Yogam, an ayurvedic mixture, with [Lord Vishnu](#) sleeping on [Anantha](#) with his head pointing towards south and facing east.

## The temple Gopuram

The foundation of the present [gopuram](#) was laid in 1566.<sup>[3]</sup> The temple has a 100-foot,<sup>[4]</sup> seven-tier [gopuram](#). The temple stands by the side of a [tank](#), named *Padma Theertham* (meaning the lotus spring). The temple has a corridor with 365 and one-quarter sculptured granite-stone pillars with elaborate carvings. This corridor extends from the eastern side into the sanctum sanctorum. An eighty-foot flag-staff stands in front of the main entry from the 'prakaram' (corridor). The ground floor under the gopuram (main entrance in the eastern side) is known as the 'Nataka Sala' where the famous temple art Kathakali was staged in the night during the ten-day *uthsavam* (festival) conducted twice a year, during the Malayalam months of Meenam and Thulam.

## Garbhagriha

In the [Garbhagriha](#), an idol of Vishnu is depicted in a reclining position over the serpent *Anantha* or *Adi Sesa*. The serpent has his face pointed upwards, as if enjoying the fragrance emanating from the lotus held in his left hand. His right hand hangs over [Shiva](#), [Sridevi](#) and [Bhudevi](#), two consorts of Vishnu stand by his side and the [Brahma](#) is seen on a lotus, which emanates from the navel of Vishnu. The idol is made up of 10008 [Saligram](#) that compose the reclining Vishnu. These [Saligram](#) are from the banks of the river [Gandaki](#) in [Nepal](#), brought with much ceremony on elephants. On top of the Saligram, "Katusarkara yogam", a special ayurvedic mix, was used to make a plaster. The katu sarkara mould keeps the idol free from pests. The abhishekam of the Lord is not a traditional ritual. The daily worship is with flowers and for the abhishekam special

separate idols are used. The flowers have always been removed using peacock feathers fearing damaging the katu sarkara on the idol

The GarbaGriha is carved out of a single stone and hence called "Ottakkal Mandapam". In order to perform darshan and puja, one has to climb on to the "Ottakkal Mandapam". The deity is visible through three doors - Face of the Lord and Siva Linga underneath his hand in the first door, Brahma seated on lotus emanating from the Lord's navel along with the "Utsava moorthi" and idols of Lord MahaVishnu, Sreedevi and Bhoodevi in the second door and the Lord's feet in the third door. Only the King of Travancore may perform Namaskaram, or bow prostrate on this "Ottakkal Mandapam". Since the idol of the Lord is also on this "Ottakkal Mandapam", anybody who bows prostrate, or any material object that is kept here, henceforth belongs to the Lord. Here, the King is called a "Padmanabha Dasa", or a "servant" of [Vishnu](#). Adherents believe that it is actually Vishnu who rules the state of Travancore.

In the 108 Divya deshams, or holiest shrines of Lord Vishnu, the idols of the Lord are in one of the three different postures. Either reclining, sitting, or standing. A unique feature of the Padmanabha Swamy temple is that it has idols in all these three postures. The main idol inside the sanctum sanctorum and viewed from three doors is in the reclining posture, the idol viewed through the central door in the standing posture, and the "Utsava Murthi", the idol taken out for the festival processions is in the sitting posture.

There are other important shrines inside the temple for Hindu deities Sri [Narasimha](#), [Sri Krishna](#), Sri [Ayyappa](#), Sri [Ganesha](#) and Sri [Hanuman](#). Many other small shrines like Kshetrapalan (who guards the temple), Vishwakshena and [Sri Garuda](#) are also present.

A unique feature that came to light recently is the fact that Lord Padmanabha's idol is entirely cast in gold except for the face and chest. Katu sarkara yogam was used to ward off invasion of the temple by the Muslim rulers. The crown of the Lord sporting kundalams in the ears, the huge salagrama mala adorning the chest and the finely chiseled poonal are in gold. The various ornaments covering the chest and the right hand sporting a huge kankanam shielding Lord Siva, the left hand holding a Kamalam are in gold. The stalk of the kamalam rising out of the nabhi is also in splendid gold. The entire length of the Lord's legs is again cast in gold.

The katu sarkara yogam was obviously an ingeniously conceived plan to avoid the prying eyes of the invaders who attacked the city.

## Legend

There are many legends regarding the origin of the temple. One such legend says that [Vilvamangalathu Swamiyar alias Divakara Muni](#) prayed to [Krishna](#) for his darshan. [Krishna](#) came in disguise as a small, mischievous boy. The boy swallowed the [Saligrama](#) which was kept in Puja. The Sage became enraged at this and chased the boy until the boy hid himself behind a tree. The tree fell down and became Vishnu in Anantha Shayanam (reclining posture on Anantha the serpent) --but when he did so, he was of an extraordinarily large size. The Sage, recognizing

that the tree was Vishnu, pleaded that because of the huge form the lord had manifested before him he could not either have a mind fulfilling darshan or circumbulate him. He then asked the Lord to shrink to a smaller proportion - thrice the length of his staff. Immediately, the Lord Vishnu shrunk himself, and told the sage that he should be worshipped through three doors. These doors are now the doors in the temple through which the idol may be viewed. Through the first door, the worship is offered to [Shiva](#); through the second entrance to [Brahma](#) on the Lord's lotus navel, and through the third is Vishnu's feet, which are said to lead to salvation. <sup>[citation needed]</sup>

There was a great fire accident in which the original Murti which was made of the wood of that tree got burned during a fire that engulfed the temple complex, was a sign of the unhappiness of the lord with the king. <sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## Mythology

**Padmanabhaswamy Temple** stands at a place considered as one of the seven Parasurama Kshetras; texts including the [Puranas](#), particularly the [Skanda Purana](#) and [Padma Purana](#), have references to this shrine. Another story tells of a [pulaya](#) couple seeing Vishnu in the form of a child. The child took morsels of rice from the hands of the couple. Also it is believed that Divakaramuni, when he saw the deity he took the first food item he saw which was an Unripe Mango and a coconut shell as an offering plate and performed primary pooja. In memory of this legend, naivedyam or offering prepared from rice is offered to the deity here in a coconut shell.

## Sri Padmanabha Swamy Mahatmyam - history

The idol is made up of 12008 salagramams that compose the reclining lord. They are special because they are from Nepal, from the banks of river Gandhaki and they were brought to the temple with all pomp and gaiety on elephant top. On top of them "katusarkara yogam",navaratnams, a special ayurvedic mix, was used to give a plaster. Followers believe that the Lord has personally come in disguise and had saved many times the Travancore Kingdom from the clutches of enemies.

## Nivedyam or offering to Perumal

Apart from the usual rice offering various other items are offered including Retna Payasam or offering of Payasam in a Gem studded Golden Vessel, Meni Thula Payasam or the Delicious Rice and Jaggery Pudding entirely made in Ghee, Pal Manga, Otta Thula Payasam, Panthranu Kalam Payasam, and Paal Payasam (Milk and Rice Pudding) which is very famous. During Thursdays, special Panakam is offered to Lord [Narasimha](#). Unni Appam, Mothakam, Aval with sugar is also offered to Lord. <sup>[citation needed]</sup>. But the most important Nivedyam in this Temple is the Uppu Manga (unripe mango soaked in brine water) which is offered in a gold covered *chiratta* or coconut shell. This coconut shell is more than 1200 years old. The Great Sage Vilwamangalathu Divakara Acharyar offered an unripe mango in this very same coconut shell and it is still preserved with thick layers of pure gold as an outer covering.

## Darshan, sevas and festivals

NarasimhaSwamy & PadmanabhaSwamy after coming from Shankumuka Beach during Aarat Festival

There are many festivals related to this temple. The major festivals are bi-annual. The *Alpashy* festival which is in October/November and the *Painkuni* festival which is in March/April, lasts for 10 days each. These festivals culminate with the *Aarat* (holy bath) procession to the [Shankumugham Beach](#). The word *Aarat* refers to the purificatory immersion of the deities of the temple in sea. This event takes place in the evening. The King of Travancore escorts the *Aarat* procession by foot. The idols of Sri Padmanabhaswamy, Krishna and Narasimha are given a ritual bathe in the sea, after the prescribed [pujas](#). After this ceremony, the idols are taken back to the temple as a procession in the light of traditional torches, marking the conclusion of the festival.

### Sri Krishna after coming from Shankumuka Beach during Aarat Festival

A major annual festival related to Padmanabha temple is the [Navaratri](#) festival. The idols of [Saraswati](#), [Durga](#), and [Murukan](#) are brought to the *kuthira malika* palace in front of Padmanabha temple as a procession. This festival lasts for 9 days. The famous Swathi music festival is held every year during this festival.

Big Idol of Pandavas displayed during Panguni festival

The biggest festival in this temple is *laksha deepam*, which means hundred thousand (or one [lakh](#)) lamps. This festival is unique and commences once in 6 years. Prior to this festival, chanting of prayers and recitation of three [vedas](#) is done for 56 days. On the festival time, hundred thousand oil lamps are lit in and around the temple premises. The next *laksha deepam* is slated on January 2014

Temple Tower during LakshaDeepam Festival

Darshan times are (before noon) 3.30-4.45, 6.30-7.00, 8.30-10.00, 10.30-11.00, 11.45-12.00; (after noon) 5.00-6.15 and 6.45-7.20. Only Hindus are permitted inside the temple. Devotees have to strictly follow the dress code. Men should remove clothes above waist and deposit in the locker room. No one is permitted to wear dress that displays both legs separately. This means no pants for men or churidhar for women. Dhotis can be borrowed at the locker room for Rs. 15. Dhotis can be worn over pants or churidhar. No cell phones or cameras are permitted inside the temple. Cell phones must be deposited in the locker room after taking it out of the bag for Rs. 15 a piece. Hand bags are permitted inside.

## Attukal Temple

The **Attukal Bhagavathy Temple** is a shrine in the state of [Kerala](#) of the Indian Union.. The [temple](#) is renowned for the annual *Attukal Pongala* festival, in which over a million women participate.<sup>[1]</sup> Attukal Temple is situated just 2 kilometer for [Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple](#) in [Thiruvananthapuram](#).

The Goddess [Kannaki \(Parvathi\)](#) is the main [deity](#) in this temple. Kannagi was married to Kovalan, son of a wealthy merchant. But Kovalan met a dancer and spent all his riches on her forgetting his wife. But after he was penniless, he went back to Kannagi. The only precious thing left to be sold was Kannagi's pair of anklets. They went with it to the king of [Madurai](#) to sell it. But an anklet was stolen from the Queen which looked similar to Kannagi's. When he tried to sell it, he was mistaken for the thief and beheaded by the king's soldiers.

Kannagi got infuriated when she heard the news and rushed to the King with the second pair of anklet. She broke one of the anklets and it contained rubies while the Queen's contained pearls. She cursed the city of Madurai and due to her chastity it came true. She attained salvation after the Goddess of the city appeared before her. On her way to Kodungalloor, Kannagi passed Attukal. She took the form of a little girl. An old man was sitting on the banks of a stream, when the girl went to him and asked him whether he could help her cross it. Surprised to find the young girl alone, he took her home. But she disappeared. She came back in his sleep and asked him to build a temple where he found 3 golden lines in his grove. He did the same. This is at the location of the present Attukal temple.



*Attukal Pongala* is the main [festival](#) of this temple. Millions of women gather every year in the month of [Kumbham](#) around this temple and prepare *Pongala* ([rice](#) cooked with [jaggery](#), [ghee](#), [coconut](#) as well as other ingredients) in the open in small pots to please the Goddess Kannaki. During the festival nearly five kilometres around the temple become covered with smoke from the 'aduppu's (temporary hearths made of 3 to 9 bricks). A holiday is declared in the city on that day. Tourists from other countries also participate in the festival.

The festival has gained international attention since it was listed by the [Guinness Book of World Records](#) as the "largest annual gathering of women" in the world. The record was based on the number of [pilgrims](#) on 23 February 1997, when 1.5

million assembled to offer *pongala* to Attukal Devi.<sup>[1][2]</sup> It is estimated that 3 million women attended the 2010 edition of the festival.<sup>[3]</sup> Actor Mohan lal got married in this temple.

## Other festivals

The other festivals in this temple are:

1. Mandala Vratham - Festival in connection with the annual Utsavam of Sabarimala
2. Vinayaka Chathurthi - Pooja to the Lord Ganapathy
3. Pooja Vaypu - Identical to Dussera festival (Saraswathy Pooja and Vidyarambham)
4. Sivarathri - [Siva](#) Pooja
5. Karthika - Karthika Deepa
6. Ayilya Pooja - Milk, flowers etc. offered to serpent God and special rites
7. Aiswarya Pooia - On all full moon (Pournami) days
8. Nirayum Puthariyum (Ramayana Parayanam) - During the month of [Karkadakam](#)
9. Akhandanama Japam - 4th Sunday of every month

## Suchindram

**Suchindram**, a town in [Kanyakumari district](#) of Tamilnadu State of the Indian Union It is an important pilgrim centre and the site of the famous [Thanumalayan Temple](#) .

Suchindrum is situated in the southern most district of [Kanyakumari](#) and is 11 km from Kanyakumari city and 7 km from [Nagarcoil](#) town 70 km from adjacent [Tirunelveli](#) district and approximately 85 km from [Trivandrum](#) city. The town of Suchindrum is renowned for the [Thanumalayan Temple](#) and was an important [citadel](#) of [Travancore](#).

The town along with [Kanyakumari](#) was part of [Travancore](#). It became part of Tamil Nadu in 1956. The place is not far from [Kolachel](#) where the historic [naval battle](#) between the [Dutch](#) and [Travancore](#) was fought.



Suchindram temple

### List of other Temples

- Thanumalayan Temple
- Munuthithanankai Amman Temple
- Dwaraka Krishnan Temple
- Asramam Anusuya & Athri Munivar Homa Kundam
- Asramam Sastha Temple
- Karupasami koil
- Asramam arulmiku sree bhoothathan maadanthampuran eaaskiamman kovil

Thampuram Thampurati Tample Akkarai

## Kanyakumari

The Land that is located at the southern tip of the Indian sub continent, where the three seas meet ( The Arabean Sea, The Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean) is called Kanyakumari, or Cape Comerin. This name originated from the virgin Goddess – Kanyakumari Amman. As per Legend the Goddess Parvati under the disguise of Devi Kanniya did a penance in one of the rocks in this area to get the hand of Lord Shiva. This place is also a popular pilgrimage center.

The tourists who visit this southern most tip of India would certainly enjoy the scenes of the sunset and sunrise especially on full moon days. The sand in the beaches of Kanyakumari is unique as it is multicolored.

Lakhs of tourists, round the year are lured by the serene beauty of this place. Though sunrise can be viewed throughout the year, sunset is visible only from October 15 to March 15. However, one can view both sunrise and sunset throughout the year from atop a hill called Murugan Kundram which offers a panoramic view of Kanyakumari. The sunset and moonrise can be seen almost simultaneously on full moon days from the same spot. It is a unique spectacle.

**Amidst the sea there are two rocks known as 'twin rocks' both contributing to the rich Indian heritage with the monuments of swamy Vivekananda and Saint Thiruvalluvar.**

Kanyakumari and its surroundings are believed to be part of the land which was created by Parasurama, incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Folktales and mythological stories speak volumes about Kanyamari.

## Devi Kanya Kumari



Bhagavthy Amman temple, Kanyakumari.

**Devi Kanya Kumari**, known as **Kumari Amman** (the [virgin](#) goddess) is one of the forms of [Devi](#). She is popularly known as "Bhagavathy Amman". Bhagavathy Amman Temple is located in [Kanya Kumari](#) (formerly Cape Comorin) on the confluence of the [Bay of Bengal](#), the [Arabian Sea](#), and the [Indian Ocean](#). She is also known by several other names, including *Kanya Devi* and *Devi Kumari*.

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## Antiquity of worship

The worship of Devi Kanya Kumari dates back to the [Vedic](#) times. She has been mentioned in the [Narayana Upanishad](#) (belonging to the [Taittrya Arayanka](#)) of [Yajur Veda](#). Here there is a hymn in the form of a [Gayatri](#) addressed to the Divine Energy.

"Katyayanayai vidmahe

Kanya-kumarim deemahi Tan no Durgih procadayat"

The Divine Mother enshrined in the Temple at Kanya Kumari and worshiped as "Bhagavati" or "Devi Kanya Kumari" is the eternal ancient symbol of a Hindu Nun. She is holding a rosary in Her prayerful spiritual ecstatic mood shedding pure spiritual bliss. Her only intention is to attain the "Supreme" by doing the repetition of God's name (mantra-japa) and be a model to the whole of Hindu Womenkind an embodiment of eternal Divine Bliss.

Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), the modern Hindu Saint of India worshiped Her in December 1892 in Kanyakumari and from Her presence only decided to embark on the Missionary Work that his Master Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886) always directed him to do.

Swami Brahmananda (1863–1922) and Swami Nirmalananda (1863–1938, another two disciples of Sri Ramakrishna also worshiped Devi Kanyakumari and got Her blessings. In fact, Swami Nirmalananda brought several small girls from many parts of [Kerala](#) and made them to worship Mother Kumari in 1935-36 period. To the surprise of all, SEVEN girls out of them later became the members of the first batch of Nuns of the "SARADA ASHRAMA", a Hindu Nunnery started later in 1948 at Ottapalam, a remote village in Kerala by Swami Vishadananda.

The author of *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (60-80 A.D.) has written about the prevalency of the propitiation of the deity Kanyakumari in the extreme southern part of India; "There is another place called Comori and a harbour, hither come those men who wish to consecrate themselves for the rest of their lives, and bath and dwell in celibacy and women also do the same; for it is told that a goddess once dwelt here and bathed."<sup>[1]</sup>

## Mythical ages

Banasura, the demon, harassed Devas. Devas got to Lord Vishnu, who advised them to pray to Goddess Para-Sakthi, and Devas did a 'yagna' for her. The Goddess promised to destroy Banasura. It was pre-ordained that only a virgin-goddess could kill Banasura, so she arrived here as a Kumari (virgin) Kanya (girl) and started a penance before setting out to kill Banasura. Lord Shiva, Lord of Suchindram temple (11 km away) saw the beautiful goddess, wanted her as wife. He bid Devas to make arrangements for wedding. Devas, knowing that only Kumari could kill Banasura, did not want the marriage. So they sought help of Narada, to postpone the wedding.

Arrangements for marriage were for midnight of a certain day. The Lord left Suchindram with his entourage to where the bride was. As he was approaching her abode, Narada played his trick. He turned into a cock and crowed, implying the approach of dawn. The Lord thought that he had missed the auspicious lagna (time) for wedding, and returned.

The Goddess Kanyakumari was waiting. When the groom did not turn up at all she was in a rage; and cursed all the articles, ornaments and the food that had been prepared for the wedding. That turned into the sand and seashells, scattered along the seashore. (You see an abundance of coloured sand and seashells of every shape and form along the seashore in this town.)

Banasura heard of the virgin Goddess and came to take her by force. The Goddess exterminated him with her '[Chakrayutham](#)'. Devas called upon her to remain there, protecting them forever.

Devi Kanya Kumari blesses pilgrims and tourists who flock to the town

## Gandhi Mandapam

Gandhi Mandapam is a special temple that is one of the most important places to visit when you go to Kanyakumari in the southern tip of India. Gandhi Mandapam is built near the famous Anna University. Gandhi Mandapam is one of the greatest monuments that you can look at when you go to India. This temple or monument the Gandhi Mandapam was erected to honor the world famous Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi. It is an important tourist spot that is favored by many people who come to visit India and its monuments that depict its rich cultural heritage.

## Shivgiri

Shivgiri is located to the north of Babu Budanagiri mounds in the Kadur taluk of Chikmagalur district of the Karnataka State of the Indian Union.

At Shivgiri, tigers can be seen making their way through the rich red berries of coffee seeds. These coffee shoot can be seen from the hundreds of coffee plants that is grown around the estate. This estate is supposed to be 100 years old. This estate is situated on top of the hill. It is right in the middle of a tiger reserve in the jungles of Yemmedoddi.

As one goes along the muddy road the view of the village from the top of the hill is a feast to the eye. The path up the hill is isolated.

One can hear the birds in the forest in Shivgiri. The Yemmedoddi forests were the most favourite hunting grounds of the British. They used to hunt tigers, wild boars etc.

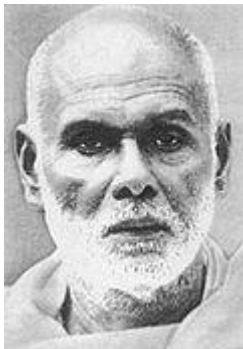
Shivgiri is entirely detached from the external world and that makes it one of the best tourist spots. It is a terrific place to relax, de-emphasize and stay aloof from the disorderly city life. The forest offers excellent opportunities for adventurous sports like trekking rock climbing and wildlife watching.

## Sree Narayana Guru Samadhi

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*Sree Narayana Guru Samadhi* marks the death ceremony of the [Sree Narayana Guru](#), saint, prophet and social reformer from Kerala.<sup>[1][2]</sup> The great Guru attained *Samadhi* on September 20, 1928. Thus the ceremony is organized to remind world that spiritually he lives forever in the minds of millions of his followers across the globe, though physically Guru disappeared. Its celebrated on the 5th day of [Malayalam](#) month *kanni*.



Sri Narayana Guru : Spiritual Guru, One of the greatest Social reformers in India

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## Samadhi Mandapam

Sree Narayana Guru lies in a state of *samadhi* at [Sivagiri, Kerala](#). Thousands of pilgrims visit here each year, to pay homage to the man who drastically changed the face of social life in [Kerala](#) and is a source of inspiration for all social reformers.

**Kollam - Oachira Temple** is an interesting and exciting trip from the city of Kollam. Oachira Temple is situated at a distance of 34 kilometers from the center of Kollam city. Dedicated to universal consciousness, the temple is marked for the absence of any idol within the premises of the temple.

The concept of 'Parabrahmam' (Cosmic Consciousness) is considered to be the presiding deity of the temple. Prayers are offered by people from all castes and classes in the temple. The festivals in Oachira Temple are celebrated with of pomp and grandeur. The temple is visited by thousands of devotees in the month of June when the annual festival of Oachirakkali is held. The play or Kali is performed in the festival, where the battle between the two feudal kings, Kayamkulam and Ambalapuzha are enacted. Two groups participate in the artificial fight with swords in the right hand and shields on the left. The fight is presented on both the days of festivities. The players enacting the battle are dressed as warriors. The movements of the players represent their physical strength and skill.

The festival of Panthrandu Vilakku in Kollam - Oachira Temple is held in the months November and December. Along with the festival, a fair is conducted in the premises of the temple, which continues for twelve days. Thousands of pilgrims throng the region during the festive days. The region is also popular for the handicrafts exhibition, known as the Dekshina Kasi that is held in the premises of Oachira Temple.

Tourists can travel in hired vehicles like taxis and auto rickshaws from Kollam to Oachira Temple. Regular KSRTC buses are another means of transport that can be availed by the visitors of the Oachira Temple.

## History

Though the legends related to the origin of a place cannot be deemed as its history, the story on the evolution of Mannarasala as the supreme place of worship of the serpent Gods is associated with Parasurama, the creator of Kerala. The history of Mannarasala has been mentioned in the 'Mandara Salodayam' Sanskrit poem written by Mannarasala M.G.Narayanan Nampoodiri of the sacred family, who wrote it on the basis of reliable accounts and legends traditionally handed down and in the light of old books available with the temple. Since the poem was incomplete, the history narrated here is from the book 'The Serpent Temple Mannarasala', published by Mr.N.Jayadevan of Manasa Publications (Translated to English by the renowned scholar Dr.Ayyappa Panikker). This book is also based on the advice and instructions received from the former Great Mother, and in accordance with the other members of the family as well as the old records examined for the purpose.

## Mannarasala Festival (utsavam)

In olden time every Hindu family in Kerala has a serpent-grove. Mannarasala, situated to the north-west of **Sri. Subramanyaswamy temple**, Haripad, is the seat of the famous temple of Nagaraja (God of serpents), the largest of its kind in Kerala. Built in a grove the temple is reputed for having 30,000 images of snake-Gods. On the day of Ayilliam asterism in the months of **Kanni and Thulam (September and October)**, all the serpent idols in the grove and the temple are taken in procession to the illam (family connected with the temple) where the offerings of **Nurum Palum** (rice flour and milk), kuruthi (a red liquid made of turmeric and lime) and cooked rice are made. The oldest female member of the family carries the idol of the Nagaraja and the procession is conducted with great pomp and rejoicing. Even if married, the eldest female member of the illam, is expected to lead a life of abstinence when she becomes the oldest female in the family. During the festival days thousands of people assemble at Mannarasala to worship and propitiate the serpent gods. The offerings include coins and effigies made of gold, **silver and copper, grains of all kinds, pepper, tender coconuts, plantains, melons, sandalwood** etc. On Ayilliam days the **Pulluvans sing** and dance either on their own or for payment. Mannarasala became the pilgrim attraction.

## Mannarasala celebrations

The Ayilyam day in Tulam, Kanni and Kumbham months in the Malayalam calendar and the Mahasivarathri are celebrated here with great pomp. The Ayilyam in Kanni is the birthday of Nagaraja and that in Kumbham is the birthday of Anantha, the Muthassan of Nilavara (cellar).

## Mannarassala Ayilyam

The most celebrated festival at Mannarassala is the Ayilyam of Thulam. In the beginning, the Ayilyam of Thulam had no speciality or importance. It was a regular custom for the **Maharaja of Travancore** to visit this temple on Ayilyam day in Kanni. On one occasion, the Maharaja could not reach the temple as usual and had to postpone the visit to the **Ayilyam day in Thulam**. The royal palace met all the expenses for the celebrations of that Ayilyam. Several landed properties were given away to the temple free of land tax in order to make the festival more attractive, as an expression of repentance. Thus the Ayilyam of Thulam came to secure a royal splendor and official glamour without difficulty. The **Ayilyam days** of Kanni and Kumbham are still celebrated with befitting grandeur.

## Nagaraja

The presiding deity at Mannarasala is Nagaraja. He is Anantha (Vishnu) and Sarparaja is Vasuki (Siva). It is believed that Nagaraja, as the installed deity, is endowed with the form of Vishnu and the **spirit of Siva**. (From the phenomena observed at the time of the installation the power of Vasuki was manifested and that of Anantha interiorized. Taking into account the power of Vasuki which was manifest; the Saivite form of worship was followed. (This may be reason for the magnificent procession taken out here on Mahasivaratri day). Anantha represents the ‘**Vaishnava Sankalpa**’ and Siva represents the ‘**Siavaite Sankalpa**’.

## **Sarpayakshi & Nagayakshi**

Sarpayakshi and Nagayakshi are the beloved consorts of Nagaraja. The main temple premise has two separate sanctum sanctorums, one devoted to Sarpayakshi and the other for Nagaraja. Sarpayakshi enjoys special privileges like offering daily poojas, and is housed in the **Sanctum Sanctorum**. In front of the shrine of Sarpayakshi, there is an Ilanji tree (Mimusops Elengi) surrounded by serpent images and with numerous pits for serpents. The quiet shrines of Nagachamundi and Nagayakshi are to the south-west of the temple and housed in **Chitrakudas**. Nagachamundi is Nagaraja's sister.

## **Pulluvanpattu**

On the eastern side of the temple, songs are recited to please the serpents. The magical, sweetness of the Pulluvan song accompanied by the sounds from the little Veenas and the special music of the Pulluva women playing on Kudam are a familiar sight at **Mannarasala**. Interestingly, this near extinct musical form is still being practiced in Kerala, thanks only to the patronage offered by Mannarasala and other few serpent worship temples in Kerala. **Pulluva** is a community of the Hindu religion, and they traditionally follow this musical form as their vocation. It is believed that the songs, recited by the Pulluva praising the Nagaraja and his consorts, the sound of the musical instrument Pulluva Veena ( an instrument of the violin family), and Kudam (an expertly covered earthen pot connected with strings, when hit by hand or metal piece produces exquisite and enchanting music), have the divine power to appease and attract divine serpents and earn their blessings. Now people with expertise in handling these musical instruments are very rare even among the Pulluva community.

## **Chitrakudas**

On either side of the pathway from the temple premises to Nilavara, there are many big and small Chitrakudas encircled by images of serpents, standing upright, and arranged so close to one another in unbroken rows inside the groves on either side. Inside those Chitrakudas are the innocent and helpless followers of Nagaraja. Until a few decades ago, almost all Hindu households in Kerala had their own **serpent groves** and ponds as part of their idol worship, also lending a perfect balance to the ecology of the region. Once the population grew manifold, many serpent groves were removed, and most of the presiding serpent deities were relocated to divine serpent lands like Mannarasala. These strange rows of **Chitrakudas** are the miniature establishments of the serpents who from their groves in other places and have been brought over and installed here by the blessed priests of Mannarasala Illam.

## Amruthapuri

It is the residence and head quarters of Matha Amrithanandamayi one of India's great Gurus, and is situated at Amrithapuri near Vallikavu. Vallikavu is a pilgrim centre near Kayamkulam. Special boats are available for hire from DTPC boat jetty in Ashramam near the Government Guest House. There are frequent buses from Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram to Kayamkulam from where there are local buses to Vallikavu.

The **Aranmula Parthasarathy Temple** is a [Hindu](#) temple near [Aranmula](#), a village in [Pathanamthitta District](#), [Kerala](#), [South India](#).



Aranmula Pardhasaradhi Temple



Aranmula Uthrattathi Boat Race



Aranmula Snake Boat race at Pathanamthitta

The temple is on the left bank of the [Pampa River](#). The sacred jewels of [Ayyappan](#) (Thiruvabharanam) are taken in procession to [Sabarimalai](#) each year from Pandalam, and Aranmula Temple is one of the stops on the way. Also, the Thanka Anki (golden attire) for Ayyappa, donated by the king of Travancore, is stored here and taken to Shabarimala during the Mandala season (late December). Aranmula is also known for the watersports involving a spectacular procession of snake boats. It is also linked with legends from the [Mahabharata](#).

It is one of the most important [Krishna](#) temples in Kerala, the others being at [Guruvayur](#), Trichambaram, Tiruvarppu and [Ambalappuzha](#).

Also, it is one of the five ancient shrines in the [Chengannur](#) area of Kerala, connected with the [Mahabharata](#). The Chengannur temple is related to [Yuddhishtira](#); the [Tiruppuliyur](#) temple to [Bheema](#); Aranmula to [Arjuna](#); [Tiruvamundur](#) to [Nakula](#) and [Tirukkadittanam](#) to [Sahadeva](#)). It has been glorified by the [Tamil](#) hymns of [Nammalwar](#) of the 1st millennium CE.

The temple has four towers over its entrances on its outer wall. The eastern tower is accessed through a flight of 18 steps. Descending 57 steps through the northern tower, one can reach the Pampa River.

## CHAKULATHUKAVU

Neerattapuram, Thalavady panchayat, Alappuzha District, Kerala and is one of the most popular temples in the state.

Bhagawathi is one of the most popular deities in the area. Pilgrims from all over South India visit and worship the Devi. The temple was less known even to the local residents and lay as a family temple of a local resident. This remained until it was renovated a few decades before.

The ancient history of the temple has some divine connections with the story of Sumbha and Nishumbha referred to in the Devi Mahatmyam. The story goes that two demoniac characters called Sumbha and Nishumbha derived super human powers through rigorous meditation of Lord

Brahma. They received a boon that they could be killed only through a battle with woman. Such a condition being almost impossible, Sumbha and Nishumbha conquered Indra and other Devas. They became the unquestioned monarchs of the three worlds. The helpless Devas under had to flee away and take shelter in remote jungles.

Located on the banks of the holy Pampa River, this temple has attracted pilgrims all over Kerala and became one of the most popular pilgrim centre of the state ,thanks to the excellent promotional strategy of the temple management.

The major festival is Pongala which takes place in the temple during the month of Vrischikam (November/December).This is the time when the glory of the Goddess is at its peak. Lakhs of women devotees gather around the temple as early as even one week before the function. The temple premises will be over crowded and the devotees arrange places for offering the pongala on both sides of the main streets. The queue usually extends to a surprising length of 20 km. Rice, coconut and jaggery are brought by women devotees along with round earthen pots for cooking. The Chief Priest lights the main hearth from the divine fire inside the sanctum sanctorum. This fire is exchanged from one oven to another.

Panthrandu Noyampu is another festival celebrated at the temple. This is the type of fasting and prayer which qualifies the devotee for eternal blessings of Chakkulathamma. This fasting starts every year from the first day of the Malayalam month of Dhanu till the twelfth.

The other festivals are Naree pooja, Thrikkarthaka

## Chengannur Bhagawathy Temple

This temple is located Chengannur, a village situated 40 km away from the town of Kottayam in Kerala. Lord Maha Deva is consecrated facing east and the Goddess Bhagawathy is facing west in this temple. What is very unique about this temple is that the people believe that the Goddess has periods once in a while at this temple. There is also a temple of [Vishnu](#) in Chengannur. Nammazhavar has visited this temple and sung about Lord Vishnu there. People believe that Yudhishtira built the first temple of Lord Vishnu to get rid of his sin of telling a lie in the battle field.

Outside the main temple of [Shiva](#) and Bhagawathy, there are [temples](#) for Sastha, Neelagreeva (blue necked [Lord Shiva](#)) and Sthaleesa.

People believe that in the southern part of the temple, several great Manthra books used to get rid of poison are buried. If the devotee stands on the rock cover and sees the tip of the Sree Kovil, for the entire day, people believe that he would not be affected by poison. There is also a belief that if someone puts his hand in the hole in the western wall and takes a false oath, he would be

bitten by a divine snake. According to folklore, a local boy of the poison doctor family was challenged by a great Azhwar. That night the boy started crying and prayed to the Goddess. She told him that in a pipe in her granary, there was a snake. The boy took out the pipe and challenged the Azhwar to make the snake come out of the pipe. Although the Azhwar tried his best, he could not make the snake come out. The boy then commanded the snake to come out. The snake in the pipe came out and started chasing the Azhwar. He pleaded with the boy to control the snake. The boy then requested the snake to go back to the pipe, and put the pipe out through the hole in the western wall. People believe that this divine snake is still there and would bite anyone who takes a false oath.

There are several stories about this temple:

One belief is that when Lord [Shiva](#) cut the body of his consort Sathi Devi into pieces and threw them all over India, the middle part of her body fell in the place where this temple is located. Because of this, they believe that the Goddess in this temple has monthly periods. People also believe that because of this, the Shiva Linga in this temple is consecrated on a triangular pedestal.

There is also a belief that the Goddess consecrated here is not Parvathy, but instead is Kannagi, the Tamil heroine who burnt the city of Madurai for avenging the injustice done to her husband. It seems she crossed over to Kerala and stood below a Vengai tree. A huntress saw her and made her statue in mud. Later Cheran Chenguttuvan made an exactly similar statue and consecrated it here.

According to another story, when Shiva married to Goddess Parvathi, the entire world went to attend the marriage, and as a result, the earth became unstable. Lord Shiva then sent Sage Agasthya to go to the south. The sage made Lord Shiva promise that he would once again celebrate the marriage for the sage in the south. When Lord Shiva came along with Goddess Parvathi to Chengannur, she came of age. The devas celebrated this event at Chengannur. Later however, this place was completely forgotten. This place was called Sonadhri (Red Mountain) and sage Parasurama established an Agraharam here. At that time, one tribal woman sharpened her sword on a stone and blood started oozing from the stone. The Brahmins were called and they found that this was a statue of Lord Shiva. So they decided to build a temple. The astrologers also found the presence of the Goddess there. So they decided to build a temple for the Goddess also. At that time, the famous Perunthachan visited the temple. The people there requested him to make a statute of the Goddess. Instead, he showed them a spot in the northwest of the temple and asked them to start digging there. When they did, the present-day statue was recovered from there. Then they consecrated both the gods after performing Kumbhabhishekam.

Once, when the mesanthe (the chief priest) opened the temple of the Goddess in the morning to change the flowers, he was astounded to find that the cloth which the Goddess was wearing had a stain. This cloth was shown to the ladies of Vanchi Puzhatu Madam as well as the land lady of the house of Thazhaman pothy. Both of them confirmed that Goddess was undergoing periods.

Thazhaman pothy advised the Mesanthe to remove the statue to a separate temple and close the door. The pooja for the next three days was performed in the northeastern corner of the temple.

He also asked his wife and the chief lady of Vanchi Puzhathu Madam to keep the Goddess company during the night. For several generations the ladies of these houses keep company to the Goddess during the time of her periods. After this incident, this started occurring regularly every month for some time. Nowadays however, it happens three to four times a year. The cloth which the goddess wears during this time (Thiru poothu) is considered to be a prized possession, and is worshipped in many homes.

On the fourth day after the periods start, the goddess is taken on a female elephant for her ritual bath, accompanied with musical instruments to the nearby Mithra River. The namboodiri [women](#) give the Goddess an oil bath and bring her back. The statue of the Goddess is secretly taken out, mounted on the top of the elephant, and the temple is closed. Ladies raise Mangala Dwani with their throat (called Kuruvai). The elephant on which the goddess rides is received with Nira Para. After the ritual bath given by the ladies, the priest does ceremonies like Oil Abhishekam, Milk Abhishekam etc and after worshipping her, the goddess is brought back to the temple.

There is yet another story which is also popular. According to this story, after the consecration of the Goddess, Perunthachan once again came to the temple along with a Pancha loha idol of the Goddess. He predicted that the temple will catch fire and then the Devi idol will be destroyed. He said at that time that this new Pancha loha idol should be consecrated.

The prediction came true. During the fire, the Shiva Linga was saved by coating it with mud, but the idol of the goddess could not be saved. When they were searching for a suitable replacement idol, Neelakandan of Thazaman Pothi's house was told about this story in a dream. He was also told that the idol brought by Perumthachan was preserved below a stone in the river.

Although they tried several times to find the idol, they were unsuccessful. At that time, some fishermen from Karunagapally came to this place and they were able to find the idol. They brought the idol to the temple and handed it over the temple priest. That day coincided with the festival of Shiva Rathri. Even now, on every Shiva Rathri festival, the fisher folk of Karunagapally are honoured at the temple.

This temple was under the control of Travancore kings. Once, a British resident called Munro laughed at the belief of the periods to the Goddess and stopped all grants for observing it. From then onwards, his wife started to bleed without stopping. Though he consulted with several doctors, the bleeding continued without stopping. One wellwisher of Munro told him that it may be due to his action in stopping the grants to Chengannur temple. Then Munro said that if his wife is cured, he will create a trust whose interest would be sufficient to observe the celebration of the Thirupoothu (periods) of the Goddess. His wife was then soon cured. Apart from a creating the trust, Munro also presented two golden bangles to the Goddess.

The temple opens everyday at 3.30 am and remains open 11.30 am. Several functions are held each day during this time. Then it again opens at 5 pm and remains open up to 8 pm. The major festival of the temple is in the month of Dhanu (December-January), and the Arattu (ritual dip in the river) is on Thiruvadira day

## Malayalappuzha

**Malayalappuzha** is a temple town just outside [Pathanamthitta](#) City Suburbs, located in [Kerala](#) state of the Indian Union. It is 7 km away from [Pathanamthitta Central Jn.](#) and 5 km from [Kumbazha Jn.](#)

The village is famous for the ancient Durga Devi Temple. Hundreds of devotees across Kerala visits the Temple Daily.

The History of this temple is very interesting. This temple was originally situated in a small village called Edathitta, in Pathanamthitta Dist. This was a full fledged village, ruled by Raja Shaktibhadran, the only Sanskrit south Indian writer. One day a tantrik from Malayalappuzha visited this place, as he heard a lot about the Devi temple there. Since Malayalappuzha was in drought for many years, the Tantrik, with his powers, migrated the shakti's of the devi to Malayalappuzha. And thereafter the place progressed at a rapid pace. As the shakti's were taken away from Edathitta, the place faced many destructions. And gradually there were no signs of the Devi temple. Then according to the prashnakundali people found out as to when the powers of the Devi were migrated and as to when will it come back. It was also revealed that the powers cannot be transferred completely within a short time and that it will take 3000 yrs for this shakti to come back completely. And in 1992, somebody from that village saw a dream that the vigraham (idol) and the pooja utensils were beneath the ground. Accordingly, people started digging that place, where they found everything mentioned by the person who saw the dream. The villagers then contributed towards temple which has become very famous now.

## Erumeli Sastha Temple

From the day the 'Vrutham' commences, till the pilgrimage ends, all male pilgrims are addressed as 'Ayyappans' and the female pilgrims are called 'Malikapurams'. This is also the common form of mutual address amongst the pilgrims. Pilgrims who are proceeding to Sabarimala for the FIRST TIME are called 'KANNI AYYAPPANS'. or 'KANNI MALIKAPURAMS'.

## Petta Thullal at Erumeli

"Thullal" means frenzied dancing. 'Petta Thullal' is actually a mass frenzied dancing accompanied by loud music created by traditional instruments of this region. Prior to [Petta Thullal](#), the pilgrims smear colour on their faces and bodies. It is said that smearing of colours and



taking part in this sort of a dance is a symbolic step towards shedding one's ego which is an essential prerequisite before undertaking the pilgrimage. It is obligatory for all Kanni Ayyappans and Kanni Malikapurams to perform Petta Thullal. The 'second year' pilgrims are entrusted with the task of dressing up 'Kanni Ayyappans' for the 'Petta Thullal' ceremony. The participants and the onlookers seem to agree that "more the noise, bigger the crowd, more frenzied the occasion, greater the satisfaction". Varied reasons are offered to justify what 'Petta Thullal' signifies. Some such explanations are:-

- The demon whom Ayyappa slayed was in the form of a buffalo. Buffalo in Malayalam is called 'Eruma' and some people say that the name 'Erumeli' is derived from the word Eruma. When the word spread that Ayyappa had slayed the demon in the form of a buffalo, they undertook this dance to commemorate the victory of good over evil.
- There is a school of thought that says that Petta Thullal was a sort of physical conditioning for Ayyappa's troops before they set course on their difficult journey through rough terrain to engage the brigand Udayanan who was a law unto himself.

An overpowering atmosphere of religious ceremonies prevail at Erumeli during the pilgrimage season. Between the sound of conch shells and Saranams emanating from the Kochambalam, Sastha Kshetram and surroundings at Erumeli, one can distinctly hear the muezzin's call from the minaret of [the mosque](#) that is located between the two temples. This is ample proof of the brotherhood and religious harmony prevailing in the area. During Petta Thullal, 'Kanni' participants carry a wooden arrow. This arrow is retained by them till they reach Saramkuthi Aal in the proximity of



Sabarimala temple. As per legend, Malikapurathamma, whose temple also exists at Sannidhanam is in eternal wait for Ayyappan to marry her. It is said that Ayyappan, a celibate, had promised that he would marry her in that year when no 'Kanni Ayyappan' arrives at Sannidhanam. Kanni Ayyappans mark their arrival at Sabarimala by depositing these arrows at 'Saramkuthi Aal'. From 15th to 18th Jan, Malikapurathamma is taken out to this location to check for the presence of arrows. If arrows are found, that means Kanni Ayyappans had visited Sabarimala. She returns dejected to her abode waiting for the next year. With the chopping down of the 'Aal' at Saramkuthi, more and more Ayyappans are seen depositing the arrows at Sabaripeedom (where Sabari attained salvation after a long penance. Traditional offerings at Sabaripeedom are breaking of coconuts and the 'vedi' vazhipadu). This is against convention and must be avoided because if Kanni Ayyappans continue to deposit their wooden arrows at Sabaripeedom then a day may come when Malikapurathamma finds the place bereft of arrows. This could lead to an indication that no 'Kanni' ayyappan has visited Sannidhanam that year. In the old days, it is only after some days after the commencement of the traditional vrutham on 1st of Vrichikam that pilgrims arrived at Erumeli. But nowadays scenes of 'Petta Thullal' can be seen from Vrichikam 1st (the first day of the traditional vrutham) itself. Petta Thullal takes place almost everyday from the 1st of the Malayalam month of Vrichikam (around Nov 17th) till a couple of days prior to the temple closing on 20th Jan.

Many pilgrims come to Erumeli by car or other vehicles, perform the Petta Thullal and continue their journey by the same means to Pampa. At Pampa they commence their trek on foot.

## Petta Thullal at Erumeli by Ambalapuzha and Aalangat Groups

Dhanu 27th ( around Jan 11th), certain time blocks are reserved for groups from `Ambalapuzha' and `Aalangat' to perform their `Petta Thullal'. It is said that these localities had sent large contingent of troops to augment Ayyappan's forces and accordingly this special `lien' accrue to them to honour their warriors. Other pilgrims are generally not permitted to join these groups as they would have rehearsed and co-ordinated their efforts for a better performance. This event will gets more and more colourful as the two groups compete with each other in a friendly spirit. It is a memorable event for spectators and photographers alike. Ambalapuzha Petta



Thullal party leaves Ambalapuzha on 8th Jan morning after offering traditional prayers at Ambalapuzha temple. The group consists of nearly 350 ayyappans. Enroute they are ceremoniously received at Thakazhi, Anaprambal, Pakkulathu Kavu, Thiruvalla Sri Vallabha Swami temple. The party finally reaches Manimalakkavu Devi temple. There they prepare for the `Aazhi Pooja' scheduled for 9th Jan. After the Aazhi Pooja, the party departs for Erumeli, arriving there on 10th Jan morning. The Petta Thullal of Ambalapuzha Group, consisting of nearly 350 members, commences on the specified day at around forenoon. The group assembles in front of the small temple along with caparisoned elephants, traditional wind and percussion instruments, wooden bows and arrows, clubs, bunches of twigs/grass etc and waits in anticipation of a divine eagle which is expected to appear over the small temple. Petta Thullal commences only after the divine eagle is sighted in the sky. It is believed that Sri Krishna, who is the reigning deity at Ambalapuzha temple, leaves Ambalapuzha temple on the morning of Dhanu 27th, immediately after the temple doors close after noon pooja and arrives overhead Erumeli on a divine eagle, his favourite means of transport, to bless the Petta Thullal party from Ambalapuzha. Hence, the wait for the divine eagle. During Petta Thullal, the participants constantly chant the religious phrases "Ayyappa Thinthaka Thom" and "Swamy Thinthaka Thom". This is chanted loudly in consonance with the lively rhythm of the dance. The Petta Thullal traditionally starts from the small temple (Kochambalam) at



Erumeli. A small idol of `Dharmasastha' is carried on caparisoned elephant. Then the dancers move on to Nainar mosque of Vavar, who was a close friend of Ayyappan, to pay their respects there. The party is ceremonially received at the mosque. A representative of Vavar Swamy will then accompany the group to the big temple (Valiambalam) which is about a kilometre away. After going around the the big temple traditionally, the Petta Thullal comes to an end. After this members of the Petta Thullal troupe bathe and subsequently partake in the community feast which is held in the forenoon/afternoon. In the evening, they set off on foot to Karimala. The Petta Thullal by Aalangat group takes place a few hours later after sighting a particular star in the day sky.. Aalangat group does not go the mosque of Vavar Swamy as they believe that Vavar Swamy, whose permanent base is

Erumeli, has left the mosque with the group from Ambalapuzha. During the Petta Thullal by Aalangat group, a shining star is observed in the sky traditionally. There is a healthy competition between the groups to perform to perfection. The group will be received and provided accommodation by Akhila

Bharatha Ayyappa Seva Sangham at Pampa. After witnessing the Pampa Vilakku on 13th night, the group will move on to Marakootam enroute to Sannidhanam. There they will officially be welcomed by Senior Devasom Board and Police authorities. On Makaravilakku day, 'Neyyabhishekam' and 'Ellu Nivedyam' will be performed on behalf of the group. On 15th, special Seeveli of the Ambalapuzha group will be conducted at Sannidhanam. Accompanied by traditional music and escorted by caparisoned elephants and ceremonial 'thala poli' the group will set out from the temple of Malikapurathamma. They proceed to Pathinettam Padi and as the Seeveli reaches the Pathinettam Padi, the steps are ceremoniously cleaned and obsequies paid to the holy steps by lighting camphor flames.

## **Pampa Ganapathi temple**

**Pampa Maha Ganapathi Temple 60kms from Pathanamthitta town and 8 Kms from Sabarimala, has an important role in the Sabarimala pilgrimage. The Mahaganapathi Temple at Pampa is the main halting point. By climbing about 102 steps the temple is reached. The main offering here in the temple is breaking of coconuts. The other holy places close to the temple are Neelimala, Appachimedu, Sabarepeedam, Saramkuthi. Kodumon Chilanthyambalam**

## **Thirunakkara Mahadevar Temple at Kottayam**

**Thirunakkara Mahadevar Shiva Temple Kottayam is one of the oldest shrines in the city that was built about 5 centuries ago. It was constructed by a South Indian ruler named Thekkumkoor Maharajah.**

**Thirunakkara Mahadevar Shiva Temple claims a special mention among the numerous tourist attractions of Kottayam, due to its rich architecture. The interior walls of this holy shrine are decorated with striking, colorful and enticing murals. This kind of elegant architecture is a typical feature of Kerala. The sanctum sanctorum or the innermost shrine of Thirunakkara Mahadevar Shiva Temple is adorned with impressive images of epic characters from the Hindu mythology. These beautiful scenes draw the attention of tourists. Several cultural events are organized in Koothambalam, a building located within the premises of the Shiva temple.**

**Enshrined with the idol of Lord Shiva, Thirunakkara Mahadevar Shiva Temple**

**in Kottayam hosts a popular festival in the middle of March. The atmosphere of the festival gets charged with the captivating performances of Kathakali dancers and Velakali. The other attractions of the festival are the stunning performances of drummers and processions of ornately decorated elephants.**

**The prominent and convenient location of Thirunakkara Mahadevar Shiva Temple in Kottayam has made it easily approachable from all part of Kerala. Tourists coming from other states of India can directly reach Kottayam by rail or road transportation services. Once in Kottayam people can take taxis, auto rickshaws and buses to arrive at the temple.**

**A large number of devotees and pilgrims from various parts of India visit Thirunakkara Mahadevar Shiva Temple Kottayam as it is one of the significant religious tourist spot in Kerala.**

**Surya Kalady Mana :**

Surya Kalady Mana is ancient as Lord Parasuraman era. The ancestors of Surya Kalady Mana were brought by Parasuraman. The history says that Parasuraman brought the Brahmins from outside to Kerala for entrusting them certain responsibilities. He entrusted them mainly the duties of Priesthood, Medical and Black Magic. Surya Kalady Mana was entrusted with the responsibility of conducting Thantric rites and Black Magic.

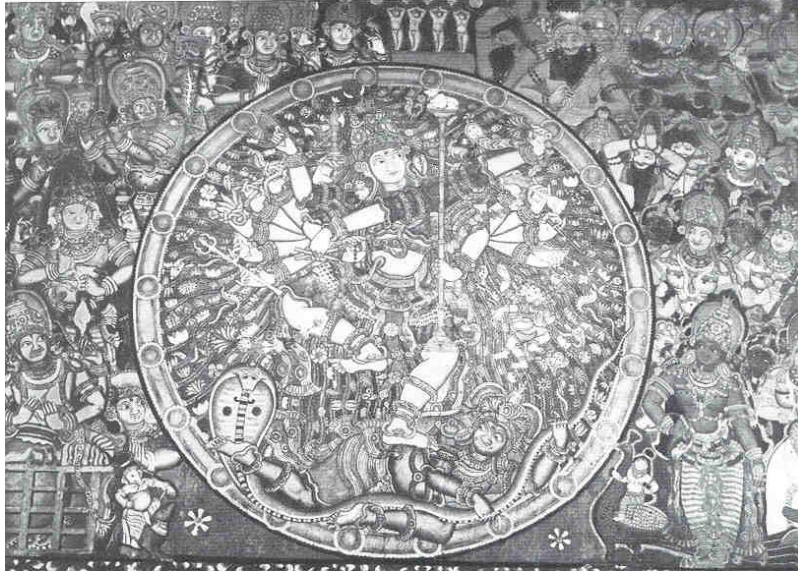
The Mana has produced a number of eminent personalities, some of them in literary works. The famous literary works – Ithiyamala , Kerala Sahitya Charitham and Surya Kalady which have found inroads to Magazines, Cinema, Television etc are the products of Surya Kalady Mana.

Many eminent personalities have visited the Mana to compliment them for the great service they do in the field of literature and other fields highly beneficial to the mankind and to see the Mana and its possessions. Late Jayaprakash Narayan, the founder of Bharatheeya Vidya Bhavan, an eminent educational institution spreaded throughout India, ex-Vice President of India, Sri K M Munshi and Maharashi Mahesh Yogi are some among them. The list of visitors is really big. All the visitors return with some new knowledge or experience which can cherish althrough.

The Head of the Mana is Suryan Subramanyan Bhatathiripad.

## Ettumaanur Mahadevar Temple

The Ettumaanur Mahadevar temple is one of the most celebrated Shiva temples in Kerala, and is on the Ernakulam [Tiruvanandapuram](#) railroad south of **Kottayam**.



**Legend** has it that **Khara** (of the Khara Dhooshana demon duo) of Ramayana worshipped Shiva at Chidambaram and obtained from him three **Shivalingams** and journeyed holding one shivalingam on each hand and one in his mouth. He sojourned at **Vaikom**, and set the shivalingam on the ground and to his dismay realized that it had gotten rooted to the ground. Khara therefore installed the other two shivalingams at **Ettumanur** and **Kaduthuruthy**. It is believed that visiting these triad of temples in a single day is of great significance.

Legend also has it that Khara installed an image of Krishna in the north western corner of this temple.

There are several other legends associated with this shrine. Legend has it that **Shiva** created a deer and set it to play in an island; when **Parasurama** reclaimed land from the sea, this island is said to have become part of what is Kerala now. The isle of the deer is referred to as Harinadweepa. The **malayalam** word for deer is **Maan**, and hence this place came to be known as Maanoor.

**Legend** has it that this is a very ancient shrine and that it was in wilderness thanks to a curse of Lomaharsha rishi, a disciple of Vyasa, and that worshipped was restored here by **Vilwamangala** swamy who is associated with several other temples in Kerala. Inscriptions testify to renovations that were carried out in the 16th century CE here.

**The temple:** The west facing temple here has a circular sanctum covered with a conical copper plated roof crowned with a kalsam. The mukhamandapam in front of the temple bears two images of **Nandi**, one of stone and another of metal. Although there is no shrine to **Parvati**, the rear of the sanctum is revered as Parvati's shrine.

A rectangular circumambulatory passage surrounds the sanctum. The sanctum bears wood carvings of superior workmanship portraying legends from the Ramayana and the Bhagavata puranam.

Also of great workmanship are the **murals** on the western entrance to the temple; mention must be made of the painting of the dance of Shiva.

There are also shrines to Saasta, Ganapati and Dakshinamurthy in the temple.

A golden staff, visible from a distance is in front of the shrine.

At the entrance to the temple is a large metal lamp; visitors make offerings of oil and the soot that collects from the burning of the oil is believed to have medicinal value.

**Festivals:** The 10 day long festival in the Malayalam month of **Kumbham** concluding on the **Ardra** asterism is the temple's annual festival.

On the eighth day of the festival, the processional image of the deity is taken to a specially decorated site in the north east corner of the temple, when thousands throng to visit the shrine.

On this day, a unique treasure of the temple (offered by the Maharaja of Travancore) - the seven and a half elephants (ezhara pon aana) representing the eight dik paalakas or the guardians of the cardinal directions are displayed. Seven of these golden elephants are two feet in height while the eighth is a foot high.

## Malliyoora Mahaganapathy Temple

Malliyoora Mahaganapathy Temple is located to the northwest of Ettumanoor and South east of Kaduthuruthy, south of Muttuchira junction. This is a good camping site for Sabarimala pilgrims.

The Malliyoora Maha [Ganapathi](#) temple is situated in Kuruppanthara in Manjoor Panchayat of [Kottayam](#) District. It is a very ancient temple. Before the rule of the 'Perumals' . this temple existed, this fact is recorded in the temple documents. Those who perform the pooja of this temple belong to the Manayathatillam. Only a member of Malliyoora mom can become the 'Melshanti' . The present 'Melshanti' is Parameswaran Namboodiri. Mahaganapathy is the deity of this temple. There are also 'Upadevatas' like Shastha, Bhagawathi, Anthi Mahakalan and Yakshi in this temple. The presence of [Vishnu](#) is also felt, Tues~ days, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays are important and auspicious days here. Brahmasree Malliyoora Shankaran Namboodiri who has completed more than 2,500 "Bhagawatha Saptaham" and is known as "Bhagawatha Hamsam" is the chief attraction of the temple

Important Offerings are

1. The 'Palpayasam' offering is for the welfare of the children and for those who do not have children and this offering is made to Vishnu Bhagawan
2. Garland made of bananas - This offering is made for getting good marriage proposals, it is performed on Tuesdays and Fridays
3. For the prosperity of the family 'Abhishekam' of thousand pots
4. 'Mukkutti' Pushpanjali is performed for the achievement of one's desires.
5. 'Thadi Nivedyam' is for the curing of diseases.

## Sun Temple at Adityapuram, Kottayam

Adityapuram is a small village located near [Kaduthuruthy](#), [Kottayam District](#). It is about 2 km from Muttachira. The main attraction of the place is the Surya temple, the famous sun temple in Kerala. Kaduthuruthy Mahadeva Temple and Kaduthuruthy Valiapalli are the places of interest around Adityapuram.

Adityapuram is about 4 km away from Kurupanthara. The place can be approached by road on the [Kottayam-Ernakulam](#) route. Ettumanoor Railway Station is the nearby railhead.

### **Kadathuruthy Mahadeva Temple**

The temple is situated mid-way between Vaikom and Ettumanoor. Kaduthuruthy is a small town, the northern and western parts of which are spread over by Vembanattu backwaters. During the tenth century this place was under the administration of Pandya Kings. However, it was divided into Vadakkumkoor and Thekkumkoor. Kaduthuruthy became the headquarters of Vadakkumkoor dynasty. The rulers were the supporters of Zamorins. When Marthanda Varma conquered Vadakkumkoor, he showed respect to the rulers by giving them pensions. Gradually this dynasty was declined and removed from the pages of Kerala history.

As it has been mentioned earlier in this book when describing the history of the Vaikom temple, Kharasura had got three idols of which the one he took in his mouth, had been placed at Kaduthuruthy, marking the origin of a temple on the top of a small hill. Now this temple comes under the Travancore Devaswom Board.

The Sivalinga of the temple faces to the east. It is the smallest of the three Sivalingas, only 3” tall. The mandapam in front of the shrine has got an array of wood carvings. The story of ‘Karthaveerarjuneeyam’ has been carved and displayed here with architectural elegance. About 300 years ago most part of the temple was consumed by fire, but the mandapam, with its splendid carvings, was remained unhurt. While the fire was spreading out, the chief priest clasped the idol at his breast and cried aloud, but the flames of fire had put an end to his life. An idol of this chief priest had been erected at the northern part of the shrine in order to commemorate the event. At the southern side there stands an idol of Sree Ganapathy. Besides, Dharma Sastha, Goddess Durga had also been placed at the temple.

One Vadakkumkoor Rajah used to worship the three deities at Kaduthuruthy, Vaikom and Ettumanoor on the same day but because of his old age he could not continue it. Instead, he made arrangements at Kaduthuruthy temple for the placement of the other two deities also. As a result, Ettumanoorappan was placed at the southern gate and Vaikathappan at the north. So it is believed that

the devotees will get the triple benefit by worshipping the deity at the Kaduthuruthy temple.

A ceremonial 10 day festival is conducted at the temple every year, but it is not so famous as the one at Vaikom or Ettumanoor. In olden days when the place was under the rule of Vadakkumkoor dynasty and anna festival lasting for twenty eight days was celebrated at the temple, but gradually it came to an end.

In fact, it was under the reign of Maha Rani Sethu Lekshmi Bai that the festival had been revived. She enforced orderliness and punctuality in the temple observances. Though in the eighteenth century Vadakkumkoor dynasty had become the part of Travancore, the family deity of the Rajah had fallen into misfortune. It was difficult for the priests to meet with the daily expenses of the temple, and this condition lasted for nearly a century. But a change had occurred when the two families Mangalathur (Panicker) and Thazhathu (Kaimal) came forward and helped financially to maintain the decorum of the temple. Consequently much progress had been achieved. Now it is one of the major temples that come under the Travancore Devaswom Board.

## Vaikom Mahadeva Temple

According to popular legend, Kerala was hewn out of sea by Parasuram, the incarnation Vishnu. He brought about abundance of corn, vegetables, plants and trees to his land. He also consecrated several temples sacred to Shiva and Vishnu for the spiritual well being of his people. One such temple is at Vaikom in the Kottayam District of Kerala, dedicated to Lord Shiva, locally known as Vaikuntappan. Vaikom temple is unique by itself, for thousands of pilgrims and visitors throng the temple through out the year.

It is believed that the original shrine was renovated centuries ago by the earliest rulers of old Travancore, who took interest in this temple. The great sage Vyaghrapadar (tiger-footed Rishi) who was responsible for the Chidambaram temple, attained perfection here and the banyan tree under which he used to meditate, still stands in the courtyard of the temple premises.

It is said that the great Rishi Khara, while bathing in the sea, discovered three Lingams which he installed in Vaikom, meaning "Valathu (Right) Ettumanur Edathu (left), Kadathirithi (Centere)". These three places are equidistant from one another.

Centuries later, the great Parasurama, the creator of Kerala, discovered these Lingams and constructed the original temples for all of them, but the Vaikom temple attained more significance and prominence than the other two. The story goes that one day Parasurama was being airborne northwards, when his eyes

chanced upon a beautiful Shiva Linga below, standing in knee-deep water, radiating glory all round. Overwhelmed with joy, Parasurama descended to the spot, took the Linga and embraced it. He made a square platform and installed the Linga on it according to Sankarshana rituals. It is on this square, that the present temple stands.

The 'Sanctum sanctorum', the five enclosures (prakaram), 'mandapam', tower and other structures were also built by Parasurama strictly in accordance with the requirements of Tantric shastras. He also brought Brahmin priests and established daily worship and other rites. He exhorted the people to obtain the blessings of Mahadeva by regular worship, prayer and offerings to the Shiva Linga.

Lord Shiva is considered to be a lover of bathing (Abhishekapria). It is believed that Parasurama himself spent years at this place performing 'abhisheka' to the Linga with thousand pots of holy water (sahasra Kalashams) according to the vedic rites. In fact, Sahasra Kalasha Abhishekam is a regular form of offering at this place. Those engaged in the pious practice range from ordinary devotees and pilgrims to the princes of the royal family.

Considered as one of the largest and the oldest of all Kerala temples, the construction here is of a rare style. It was the period which saw the rise of highly embellished 'Bobical mandapa', elliptical in plan. The Mandapams, the Prakarams, the four huge corridors, the spacious halls have all been constructed with slabs of black stone. Mortar, cement or concrete is not used at all, and wood is used only as beams in certain places which may be taken only as later additions. Most of the pillars and beams and the ceiling itself are of sculptured black stones.

Occupying over eight acres of land and surrounded by high walls and four gigantic towers, the Vaikom temple is major structure of Kerala. A devotee can have 'Darshan' of the deity and offerings made for no payments at all.

Public feeding is considered the favourite pleasure of the presiding deity. Apart from the mass feasts arranged by the Devasom, the Government of Kerala and the Maharaja of Travancore, devotees of Kerala and other places in south India, also arrange frequently for such feeding. The famous Uttupura (dining hall), a 340 metres long double storeyed structure is a recent addition, along with several other buildings. Two large tanks (Pushkarinis) are also situated with the temple compound. These are considered very holy and pilgrims use them for bathing purpose.

The Lord at Vaikom is also known as 'Annadana Prabhu'-giver of feasts. Feeding the public devotees and visitors in general, and feasting on important days are considered to be offerings to propitiate the God. There used to be feasts almost

daily at this place. Even now, despite the shortage and low income from the devotees, feasts continue to be held regularly, though on a smaller scale.

As the feast at this temple is regarded as 'Prasad' given by the presiding deity, every one from pauper to prince partake the food. In fact any one who does into share the food is considered as a sinner. The food offered at Vaikom temple is said to have curative power for ailments like stomach-ache, ulcer, etc. It is the promise of the Lord Vaikuntappan that anyone who offers or feasters at this temple here, gets his desires granted. Similarly, any one who bathes the Shiva Linga with milk or holy water gets rid of the disease and other sufferings.

The 'Sanctum Sanctorum' of the temple is large and spacious and the Shiva Lingam itself is about two meter high. The annual festival of the temple is Ashtami in the month of Karthige; Ashtami on the 12 th day, and Arattu, the holy water bath for the deity on the 13th day. The Ashtami day is considered as auspicious that it is observed throughout Kerala with special worship to Vaikuntappan. At the temple, each of the days of the Ashtami festival has a special programme, 'poojas' and rituals, elegant processions, public feeding, music, dance etc. Thousands of visitors and pilgrims attend each day's function. These celebrations reach the peak on the ashtami day.

From the early hours of this day, devotees crowd the temple for 'Darshan' as this is considered auspicious. The main event occurs at night when the happy meeting between Vaikuntanathan and His son, Lord Subramanya, the presiding deity of the nearby Udayanapuram, takes place. It is believed that Udayanapuradappan, as the son is called, had gone to a battle with the Rakshasa and the meeting is an occasion for the father to greet the triumphant son.

The coming of Udayanapuradappan accompanied by the Gods and Goddesses of the neighbouring temples, all mounted on gorgeous caparisoned elephants with 'Nagaswaram' and hundreds of torches (Theevattees), provide a grand sight. Hundreds of thousands of visitors collect to witness the symbolic meeting of the father and the son and make offerings to the deities. It looks as though the Gods converse with each other, meeting as they do, after a long interval. After going round the temple, the 'leave taking ceremony' (aarattu) takes place. For this function also, Udayanapuradappan comes to Vaikom and there is a joint worship for father and son. After this ceremony, Vaikuntappan also goes to his son's place and has a bath. There are 'poojas' for the two Gods.

## Chottanikkara Temple

The **Chottanikkara Temple** is a famous temple of the [Hindu](#) mother goddess [Bhagawati](#). The [temple](#) is located near [Ernakulam](#) an important city of the State of Kerala of the Indian Union. The temple is one of the most popular temples in

the state, along with [Sabarimala](#). Bhagawati is one of the most popular deities in the area, Chottanikkara Devi is worshipped at the temple, in three different forms: as [Saraswati](#) in the morning, draped in white; as [Lakshmi](#) at noon, draped in crimson; and as [Durga](#) in the evening, decked in blue. Lord [Shivais](#) also worshipped at the temple. People suffering from mental illnesses commonly visit the temple, as Bhagawati is thought to cure her devotees. One should not miss the 'Guruthi Pooja' in the 'Keezhkkaavu' temple at Chottanikkara. This is a ritual done at late evening to invoke the goddess. Earlier 'Guruthi Pooja' was done only on Fridays. But nowadays, it is performed everyday.

'Chottanikara Makam thozhal' is the famous religious festival in the temple.

### Makam Thozhal

The ritualistic bath of "Devi" in ceremonial pond in the morning at the sacred pond at [Onakkoor](#) far on the northern side of the Temple. After this "Devi" accompanied by Lord Sastha on the back of the eleven caparisoned elephants march towards the "Pooraparambhu" the traditional vantage point where they remain till 11 a.m.

After the mid-day the door of Sanctum Sanctorum closes. Only to re-open at 2 p.m for the "Makam Darsanam" at that time Devi who appears in her sacred full-fledged splendour and glory decked in her sacred gold ornaments, precious jewellery and innumerable garlands. This is exactly the form of vision which Villwamangalam Swamiyar was believed to have had when he faced westward after the "Prathishta" (installation) of Kizhukkavu Bhagavathy, Chottanikkara Devi appears at this moment clad in glittering clothes brilliant ornaments and fine jewellery with her four arms bearing varam, Abhayam, Shank and Chakram (Offering gift and refuge) to her ardent devotees. It is fervently believed that Darsanam at this moment will result in the fulfillment of all prayers and cherished desires. It is fervently believed that those who gain "Darsana" at this crucial "Mithuna Lagna" , will be blessed with the fulfilment of their long standing desire and prayers.

### Important Months

- Chingam - Thiruvonam is celebrated in the temple with Thiruvonam feast (annadanam) to all Pilgrims
- Kanni - Navarathri aghosham is a famous festival, which attracts large number of devotees. On Vijayadasami day of the Navarathri ulsavam, Vidyarambham is conducted.
- Vrishchikam - The Vrishchicka Mandala mahotsavam (festival) is celebrated during the entire period of mandalam season. Daily annadanam, stage

programmes, Naama japam etc are conducted. During this month, Thrikkarthika festival comes. It is the birthday of the Goddess and the festival runs for three days, Kaarthika, Rohini and Makayiram. On these days, there is ezhunnellippu, Kazhcha siveeli, stage programme, deepaalankaaram, Kaarthika vilakku, fireworks etc. There is also lakshaarchana and Vedamura abishekam for 15 days starting from January 1. On the makaravilakku day there is lakshadeepam (lighting of one lakh lamps) and fire works.

- Kumbham - The annual festival of the temple comes in Kumbham. It begins with Kodiyettu (Flag hoisting ceremony) on Rohini day, lasts for 7 days and ends on Uthram star. There is Pooram ezhunnellippu with 7 Elephants in the morning and at night. The ulsavam ends with Uthram Aarattu and Valiya Guruthi (Atham Guruthy).
- Medam - On the Vishu day, there will be Vishukani, Vishusadya and ezhunellippu on 3 elephants.
- Karkitakam - Ramayana masam (Ramayana Month) is celebrated during this period. Daily puranam reading (Ramayanam, Bhagavatham, etc.,) daily annadanam, devotional speeches and discourse etc., is conducted - there is also illam Nira, when fresh paddy of the year is offered to God.

### *Thripunithura Sree Poornathrayesa Temple*

Thripunithura is also known as the Land of temples. The famous [Sree Poornathrayesa temple](#) is one of them. Sree Poornathrayeesa, the deity of Poornathrayeesa temple, is in the form of "Santhana Gopala Moorthy" as told in the Bhagavatha. It is believed those who worship him truly, will be blessed with children. It is also believed that the temple Thanthri's family, (belonging to puliyanloor mana) is the next generations of the Brahmana of the Santhana Gopalam story.

## **Kodungallur Bhagavathy Temple**

**Kurumba Bhagavathi Temple** or famously known as "*Kodungallur Bhagavathy Temple*" is situated in [Kodungallur](#) town in [Thrissur District](#) of [Kerala](#), [India](#). The idol of the goddess [Bhadrakali](#) in the temple is unique as it has eight hands with various attributes. One is holding the head of the Asura, another a sword, next a 'Chelambu' and yet another a bell and so on. Routine worship at the temple every day begins early in the morning at 3:00 AM and ends late in the night at 9:00 PM. The Goddess also is popularly known as Kodunganalloramma.

### **History**

The beginning of the temple is shrouded in antiquity. The temple was built to commemorate the martyrdom of [Kannakis](#) in the [Sangam](#) age. During the reign of Kulasekhara dynasty, Kodungallur was the capital of [Kerala](#) and one of the most important parts of the region. It is said that sixth avatar of [Vishnu](#), Sage [Parasurama](#) has built this temple for the prosperity of the people. According to the old chronicles, this was the Bhagavathi temple created in the heart of the town many centuries ago to serve a special purpose.<sup>[2]</sup>



Deity of Kodungallur Bhagavathy in the temple

Legend says that after the creation of [Kerala](#) by [Parasurama](#), he was harassed by a demon called Daruka. In order to kill this evil demon, [Parasurama](#) prayed to Lord [Shiva](#) for help. As advised by Shiva, Parasurama constructed the shrine and installed the Shakti Devi as Bhagavathi. The deity in the temple, it is believed, is Parashakthi herself. According to legends, it was Bhadrakali who killed the evil demon Daruka. According to popular beliefs, the temple in the olden days was a [Buddhist](#) monastery. But according to [Kerala](#) historians, Kodunganallore, Trikkanamthikam and the neighboring areas were [Buddhist](#) and [Jain](#) centres during the Chera period. Legends say that Palliband Perumal, a ruler from that area embraced Buddhism and as a result of which, he had to abandon the Perumalship owing to severe opposition from the Hindu community.

The people of [Kodungallur](#) believe that this temple was, in the olden days, a Shiva Shrine and it was [Parasurama](#) who installed Sri Kurumba Bhagavathi in close proximity to the idol of [Shiva](#). Although this is a small town and has several temples, most of them are [Shiva](#) Shrines. The poojas are conducted under direct instructions from Sri Bhagavathi Herself. Five 'Sri Chakras' installed by [Adi Shankaracharya](#), are believed to be the main source of the powers of this deity. The priests are Namboodiris and Adikas (Madhu Brahmins) who have a right to perform 'Pushpanjalis' to the Goddess.

Bhagavathi being the patron of the Royal family of [Cranganore](#), the Raja plays an active part in the celebrations of the festival. Standing upon a rostrum built around a banyan tree, the Raja spreads out a silken umbrella soon after the door of the Devi shrine is opened. The peculiarity of the event is that it denotes the giving permission for all castes to enter the precincts of the temple for worship.

This is known as 'Kavu Theendal'. Devotees run round the temple thrice with sticks in hand before they enter the shrine. The legend goes to prove that the killing of the Demon has taken place and the sticks are substitutes for the arms and swords used in olden days.

## Festivals

### Bharani festival

The Bharani festival at the [Kodungallur](#) Bhagawati temple is one of the grandest in [Kerala](#). It is a month of festivities from the Bharani asterism in the month of [Aquarius](#) to 7 days after the Bharani asterism in the month of [Pisces](#). It normally falls between the months of March and April. The festival normally starts with the ritual called 'Kozhikkallu moodal' which involves the sacrifice of cocks and shedding of their blood which forms an important feature of this temple. The members of the Kodungallur Bhagavathy temple are allowed to participate in this ritual. It is to appease the goddess Kali and her demons who take delight in offering blood.

'Kavu Theendal', another important event of the festival, overseen by the King of [Kodungallur](#) where a hordes of Vellichapads ([Oracles](#)) make a made rush around the temple waving their sabre in air while the members of their retinue throw objects including cocks over the inner quadrangle. They make a wild cry of abuse at the goddess in bawdy language. Their abuse is said to be accepted by the Goddess followed by the purification ceremony the next day. Chandanapoti Charthal is yet another festival of smearing the image with sandal paste.<sup>[6][7]</sup>

### Thalappoli festival

The thalappoli festival is in the month of [Makaram](#) (January - February). The four day Thalappoli commences from the evening of Makara Sankranthi with religious rituals. On all the days from the afternoon to twilight and midnight to dawn. Big procession headed by richly caparisoned elephants are taken out to the accompaniment of Pancha Vadyam, Paancari, Paandi, etc.

## Triprayar Sree Rama Swami Temple

Thriprayar is located in [Thrissur District](#) in the state of Kerala, Situated in the middle of [Guruvayur - Kodungallur - Ernakulam](#) Highway ([NH 17](#)), there stands a magnificent Temple, dedicated to Lord Rama (locally known as Triprayar Thevar) . The temple is associated with many interesting legends.

The [Triprayar temple](#) was originally under the domain of the [Zamorin](#) rulers of [Kerala](#). It later came under the possession of the [Dutch](#), the [Mysore](#) sultans and the rulers of [Cochin](#). Triprayar is about 23 km away from Guruvayoor [Sri Krishna](#) temple and 30 km away from [Irinjalakuda](#) temple via Katoor, Edamuttam etc. [Kodungallur](#) is 24 km away.

### [Koodalmanikyam Temple of Bharata in Irinjalakuda, Thrissur, Kerala](#)

Koodalmanikyam Temple or Koodal Manikyam Bharatha Temple is an ancient Hindu temple located in Irinjalakuda, a small town in [Thrissur District](#) of [Kerala](#). **Kudal Manikkam Temple is the only temple in India dedicated to Lord Bharata, the brother of [Lord Rama](#)**. He is worshiped here as Lord Sangameshwara. Sangameswara is a Sanskrit word which in Malayalam translation means Koodalmanickyam. Koodalmanikyam Bharatha Temple is also one of the four temples in Kerala which form a set known as Nalambalam (Four Temples), of which each temple dedicated to the 4 brothers Rama, Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna of the



Hindu epic Ramayana.

The Koodalmanikyam Temple sanctum sanctorum is round shaped and is covered with copper plates. There is a six-foot Thaazhikakudam at the pinnacle which adds beauty to the temple structure. The lord here is Chathurbahu [Vishnu](#) with Conch, Chakra, Gada and Japamaala. However, it is believed that the Lord is Bharatha, the brother of Lord Rama. According to myths, Bharatha was anxiously waiting for the return of Rama from exile for fourteen years. He heard from [Hanuman](#) that Rama has reached Ayodhya and was much relieved and happy. Bharatha is worshipped in his happiest mood here. Lord Hanuman is seen at Thidappilly (the holy kitchen).

[The annual 11 days Koodalmanikyam Temple lasts for 11 days, in 2011 the festival is from 13th May 2011 to 23rd May 2011.](#)

#### Temple Structure

Koodalmanikyam Temple is a 9th century temple with splendid architectural beauty. Built in traditional Kerala style of architecture, the temple spreads over a wide area and is surrounded by massive wall with gorgeous gateways on the East, South and West. The temple's Western and Eastern approach ways to the inner temple features huge porches which can accommodate even 21 elephants. The eastern gateway (Gopuram) is a remarkable structure with numerous carvings embedded into its front wall. One can enter the outer quadrangle from the Gopuram. Located on the southern courtyard is the Koothambalam, the temple hall for performing Koothu and Koodiyattam. There are murals on the walls on either side of the eastern entry to Chuttambalam.

Koodalmanikyam Temple is surrounded by four vast ponds. Of which the Kuttan Kulam, located outside the compound on the eastern side, and Kulipini Theertham, located inside the compound are the two largest. Legend has it that Kulipini Maharshi performed a great ritual sacrifice, at the spot of Kulipini Theertham. Kudal Manikkam Temple is also a centre of temple arts like Kathakali, Koothu, Koodiyattom and Thullal.

### **Temple Poojas**

Most of the temples in Kerala conduct five poojas and 3 seevelis a day. While Koodalmanikyam Temple conducts only three Poojas per daily and seevelis are performed only during the annual arattu festival. Floral offerings include Lotus, Tulasi and Chethi. No other flower is taken for Pooja.

### **Offerings**

Thamaramala (Lotus garland) is an important offering to the deity. It is believed that if a lotus garland is offered before starting any new project or before the commencement of any important function, the deity bestows success.

### **Temple Festivals**

Koodalmanikyam Temple is renowned for the annual [Kudalmanikyam Arattu Festival](#) held for 11 days in the Malayalam month of Edavam (April – May). This famous event starts one day after the [Thrissur Pooram](#) and ends on the next Thiruvonam day. The festival attracts a number of devotees to watch the color, music, Orchestra and Fine Arts which cannot be seen anywhere in Kerala.



Another major festival celebrated is the Thriputhari on the Thiruvonam nakshatram in the Malayalam month of Thulam (October-November). The newly harvested rice is first cooked and offered to deity and then distributed to devotees. Next day is a special offering called Mukkudi, an Ayurvedic mixture, a divine medicine for all diseases.

### **Nalambalam Yatra**

Nalambalam Yatra, also spelled Nalanbala Yathra, is a unique pilgrimage conducted during the Malayalam month of Karkitakam, the last month of Malayalam Calendar. The pilgrims visit four temples in Kerala – Sri Rama Temple at Triprayar (22 Km North west of Irinjalakuda), Koodalmanikyam Bharatha Temple at Irinjalakuda, Lakshmana temple at Moozhikkulam (30 km south-west of Irinjalakuda) in Ernakulam District and Satrugna Temple at Payammal (5 km south of Irinjalakuda). It is believed that worship at these four temples on the same day is exceptionally worthy.

**Vadakumnathan Temple:** This temple is one of the oldest temples and is a classical example of the Kerala style of architecture and has many decorative murals and pieces of art. ‘Thrissur Pooram’ the grandest temple pageantry in Kerala, is celebrated here in April-May every year. The fireworks at the Pooram are a spectacular sight.

Visit to Ivor Madam (Situating on the banks of the river Bharathapuzha near Thriruvilwamala temple) The legends says that this is the place where Pandavas, after Kurukshetra war, got relief from their mental agony by doing prayers and Bali Tarpanas for their Guruji's and cousins who were killed by them in the war. Bharathapuzha is believed to have cleansed them of all their sins and restored their mental strength. Even now, hundreds of people come to Ivor Madam and do the last rites and Bali Tarpanam to those departed souls dear to them

## Paramekkavu

**Paramekkavu Bagavathi Temple** is one of the largest [Bagavathi](#) temples in [Kerala](#). Paramekkavu Bagavathi Temple is located in [Thrissur](#) in Kerala, [South India](#) and is considered<sup>1</sup> to be over 1000 years old.

[Thiruvambadi Sri Krishna Temple](#) is one of the two rival groups participating in [Thrissur Pooram](#), which is the biggest local festival in Kerala.

Paramekkavu Temple is situated at eastern outskirts of the Vadakumnathan temple grounds . Paramekkavu is the dominant partner of Thrissur pooram (carnival). The main deity is "**devi**" (vaishnavy- among saphthamathrukhal). As per legend, devi came with "**Kuruppal**" (head of an aristocratic Nair family) from "**Thirumadhamkunnu** (famous saphthamatha temple in malappuram district some 80 kms from Thrissur) on his umbrella. There is a "**mekkavu**" in this temple in "which is the "**Kodungallore bagavathy**" as per another legend. Besides pooram (carnival) "**Vela**" is another main function.

## Guruvayur Temple

The Guruvayur Sree Krishna Temple is a famous [Krishna](#) temple located in the town of [Guruvayur](#) in [Thrissur](#) district of [Kerala](#) State of the Indian Union.. It is one of the most important places of worship for [Hindus](#) and is often referred to as "Bhooloka [Vaikuntam](#)"<sup>[2]</sup> which translates to the holy abode of [Vishnu](#) on Earth. The divine idol installed here represents the enchanting form of [Sree Krishna](#) endowed with the four lustrous arms carrying the conch [Panchajanya](#), the discus [Sudarshana Chakra](#), the mace [Kaumodaki](#) and the lotus. Adorned

with the divine [Tulasi](#) garland the idol represents the majestic form of [Maha Vishnu](#) as revealed to [Vasudeva](#) and [Devaki](#) at the time of [Krishna Avatar](#); Hence it is also known as [Dwaraka](#) of the south (of [India](#)). Shri Krishna is popularly known here by different names such as Kannan, Unni-Kannan (Baby Krishnan), Unni-Krishnan, Balakrishnan, and [Guruvayoorappan](#).

## Divinity of the location

[Lord Siva](#) (Rudra) performed [tapas](#) and worshipped [Maha Vishnu](#) for years under the waters of the sacred tank located on the northern side of the present day temple and hence this body of water got the name of Rudra-Theertham. In the ancient days, Rudra-Theertham extended up to [Mammiyur](#) and Thamarayur (about 3 km away) and was known for its ever blooming lotus flowers. Prechethas (the ten sons of King Pracheenabarhis and Suvarna) came to this place to do tapas to attain Prajapathithwam (to become the king of all kings) from Lord Mahavishnu. Sensing the motive of the Prechethas, Lord Siva emerged out of the Rudratheertham and revealed to them the Rudrageetham, a hymn in praise of Mahavishnu. Siva suggested them to chant it with all their heart to get their wishes fulfilled. The Princes won the favour of Mahavishnu after rigorous tapas for 10,000 years under the waters of Rudra-Theertham by chanting the Rudrageetham.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Story of the Deity

The Deity of the Guruvayur temple is unique, since it is carved out of a material called Pathalanjana Sila, and is considered extremely sacred. This idol was once worshipped by [Lord Vishnu](#) in Vaikunta and Vishnu handed it over to Brahma. King Suthapas and his wife worshipped Brahma for a child and being gratified with their devotion, they received this idol from him and advised them to start worshipping it. Being pleased with their worship, Lord Vishnu appeared before them and blessed them with the boon that he himself will be born as their child in their three re-births in three different forms and in three different situations, with the idol.

Thus they got the good fortune to worship the same deity in all three rebirths. They gave birth to [Prsnigarbha](#) who gave to the world the practice of [Brahmacharya](#) Vrata (Celibacy). In their next birth, Suthapas and his wife were born as [Kashyapa](#) and [Aditi](#) and their son was [Vamana](#). In the third rebirth as [Vasudeva](#) and [Devaki](#), the Lord was born as their eighth son [Krishna](#). In the long run, Lord Krishna himself installed this idol in Dwaraka and worshipped it.<sup>[6]</sup>

At the time of Lord Krishna's Swargarohana (ascension to [Vaikunta](#)), his devotee [Uddhava](#) became sad thinking of the departure of the Lord. The Lord then gave his foremost disciple and devotee Uddhava this idol and instructed him to entrust [Brihaspathi](#) (the [Guru](#) of the [Devas](#)) with the task of taking the idol to a suitable location. Uddhava was plunged in grief thinking of the fate that would

befall the world in [Kali yuga](#) during his absence. The Lord pacified Uddhava and promised him that he himself would manifest in the idol and shower his blessings on the devotees who take refuge in him.

A deluge had closed in on Dwaraka, but Guru salvaged the idol floating in the water, with the help of his prime disciple Vayu. Guru and Vayu went around the world in search of an ideal place. At last they entered Kerala through the Palakkad gap where they met [Parasurama](#) who was going to Dwaraka in search of the very idol they were bringing. Parashurama led Guru and Vayu to a lush green spot with a beautiful lotus lake where they felt the presence of Lord [Siva](#). Lord Siva along with [Parvathy](#) welcomed them and told them that this would be the ideal spot for installing the deity. Siva permitted Guru and Vayu to perform the consecration rites and blessed them that henceforth this place would be known as Guruvayur (since the installation was done by Guru and Vayu). Siva with Parvathy then left to the opposite bank to [Mammiyur](#).

It is in memory of this incident that a pilgrimage to Guruvayur is said to be complete only with a worship of Mammiyur Siva also. [Vishwakarma](#), the divine architect built this temple. He made it in such a way that on the day of [Vishu](#) (Summer equinox) the first rays of the sun fall straight on to the Lord's feet. The deity was installed in the solar month of [Kumbha](#) (February - March) and the ceremony was begun on the seventh [asterism](#) of [Pooyam](#) and completed on the day of [Anizham](#)<sup>[3]</sup>