

SOUTH INDIA · COMPLETE TRAVEL GUIDE

Kerala

Tea hills, backwaters and quiet beaches — the easiest first big holiday for a Gujarati family.

BEST MONTHS	FROM AHMEDABAD	IDEAL DURATION	VEG & JAIN FOOD	GOOD FOR
October to March; December–January is peak	Direct flight Ahmedabad → Kochi, about 2 h 30 m	5–7 nights	Easy — Gujarati restaurants in Munnar, Jain meals on houseboats on request	Families, couples, senior parents, first-time flyers

Kerala is the destination we recommend most often to families travelling together for the first time. Distances are short, roads are good, hotels are dependable, and the three landscapes — the tea hills of Munnar, the spice forests around Thekkady, and the backwaters of Alleppey — are each a comfortable half-day's drive apart.

For Gujarati travellers the practical worries are small. Kochi is a direct 2½-hour flight from Ahmedabad, Gujarati and Jain food is easy to find in Munnar and on the houseboats, and the pace suits three generations travelling together. Our groups have been going since 2010 and Kerala remains our most repeated destination.

What to see

Munnar tea estates

Rolling hills of tea at 1,500 m; visit the Tea Museum, drive to Top Station, and see Nilgiri tahr at Eravikulam National Park.

Thekkady and Periyar

Spice plantations, a boat ride on Periyar Lake inside the tiger reserve, and a Kalaripayattu martial-arts show in the evening.

Kovalam and Varkala beaches

Calm, clean beaches in the far south; Kovalam suits resort stays, Varkala has a dramatic cliff and a quieter feel.

Alleppey houseboat

One night on a private kettuvallam through the backwaters, with a cook on board who will prepare pure-veg meals.

Fort Kochi

Chinese fishing nets, the 16th-century St Francis Church, Jew Town and Mattancherry Palace — a compact evening walk.

Athirappilly Falls

Kerala's largest waterfall, 60 km from Kochi — an easy stop on the way to or from the airport.

Padmanabhaswamy Temple

The great Vishnu temple of Thiruvananthapuram; dhoti and saree dress code applies and we arrange it.

Kathakali performance

Watch the make-up being applied before the show — the best part — at the Kerala Kathakali Centre in Fort Kochi.

Getting there from Ahmedabad

Fly: IndiGo and Air India Express fly Ahmedabad–Kochi non-stop daily, about 2 h 30 m. Kochi (COK) is the right airport for Munnar, Thekkady and Alleppey. Thiruvananthapuram (TRV) is better for Kovalam and Varkala and usually needs one stop.

Train: The Ahmedabad–Thiruvananthapuram route takes 36–40 hours (e.g. 16336 Gandhidham–Nagercoil Express). Only sensible for those who enjoy long train journeys.

Within Kerala: a private car with driver is the norm. Roads are narrow but good; average speed is 35–40 km/h, so a 130 km drive takes about 4 hours.

Getting around. Everything in this guide is done by private car with an English- and Hindi-speaking driver who stays with you for the whole trip. Auto-rickshaws work well for short hops within Fort Kochi. Kerala's KSRTC buses are reliable but not practical with luggage and elders.

When to go

SEASON	MONTHS	WHAT TO EXPECT
Peak	December – February	Dry, 22–30°C on the plains, 10–18°C in Munnar. Best weather; book 6–8 weeks ahead for Christmas and New Year.
Good	October – November, March	Occasional showers in October; March is warm on the coast but pleasant in the hills. Better prices than peak.
Hot	April – May	Humid on the coast (33–35°C); Munnar remains pleasant. Kerala schools are on holiday, so hill stations are busy.
Monsoon	June – September	Heavy rain, lush green, lowest prices. Houseboats run but may be cancelled in very rough weather. Good for Ayurveda stays, not for sightseeing-heavy trips.

Permits, rules and packing

No permits needed anywhere in Kerala. Eravikulam National Park is closed roughly February to early April for the tahr calving season — check before booking if it matters to you. Padmanabhaswamy Temple admits Hindus only and requires dhoti for men and saree or dhoti over trousers for women.

What to pack

- Light woollen or fleece for Munnar evenings (12–15°C in winter)

- Comfortable walking shoes for estate walks
- Umbrella or light raincoat in any month — Kerala rains without warning
- Mosquito repellent for the houseboat
- Swimwear for Kovalam
- Modest clothing for temples; dhoti is provided at Padmanabhaswamy but carry a shawl
- Motion-sickness tablets for the winding Munnar road

Veg and Jain food

- Munnar town has several Gujarati and North Indian restaurants; hotels serve Gujarati thali for groups on request.
- Houseboat cooks prepare pure-veg and Jain meals when told in advance — we confirm this in writing for every booking.
- Kerala vegetarian food is excellent: try avial, sadya (banana-leaf feast), appam with vegetable stew, and puttu for breakfast.
- Filter coffee and fresh coconut water are everywhere. Tap water is not for drinking; hotels provide bottled water.

What it costs

Indicative per-person costs on twin sharing for a 5–6 night trip including flights from Ahmedabad, private car, hotels, breakfast and dinner. Actual quotes depend on dates, hotel choice and group size; a group of 6+ brings the car cost down noticeably.

VALUE

₹28,000 – 35,000

3★ hotels, standard houseboat, economy flights booked 6+ weeks ahead

COMFORT

₹38,000 – 50,000

4★ hotels or resorts, premium houseboat with AC bedrooms, flexible flights

PREMIUM

₹60,000 – 90,000

5★ resorts (Kumarakom Lake Resort, Windermere, Leela Kovalam), luxury houseboat, business-class option

Where the money goes

- Flights are 35–45% of the trip: an Ahmedabad–Kochi return runs ₹8,000–14,000 booked early, ₹18,000+ in Diwali week.
- Houseboat: ₹9,000–14,000 per night for a 2-bedroom standard boat, ₹18,000–30,000 for premium; the price is per boat, so a family of 4–6 shares it.
- Car: an Innova with driver is roughly ₹4,500–5,500 per day including fuel and driver allowance.
- Hotels: 3★ ₹3,000–5,000 per room per night, 4★ ₹6,000–10,000, 5★ resorts ₹15,000–35,000.

Travelling with parents and children

- Munnar's road has 30 km of hairpin bends; seat anyone prone to car sickness in front and carry Avomine.
- Houseboats have one step down to the bedrooms and no lifts — fine for most seniors, but tell us about mobility needs so we pick a boat with a ground-level bedroom.
- Book Eravikulam early morning; the queue for the shuttle bus builds after 9:30 am and the walk is 1 km uphill on a paved path.
- Children love the Kathakali make-up session more than the performance itself — arrive an hour early.
- Kerala hotels rarely include a fourth bed; families of five need two rooms. Say so at quote time.
- Carry a photocopy of Aadhaar for every traveller; hotels and houseboats ask for ID at check-in.

Questions families ask us

Is Gujarati or Jain food really available in Kerala?

Yes. Munnar and Thekkady have Gujarati restaurants that cater to groups from Gujarat and Rajasthan; Alleppey houseboat cooks handle Jain meals (no onion, garlic or root vegetables) when informed at booking, and we confirm it in writing. Fort Kochi has fewer options, so we choose a hotel with a good vegetarian kitchen.

Which month is best?

October to March. December to mid-January has the best weather and the highest prices; late January to early March is the sweet spot for weather and value. Avoid the June–August monsoon for a first visit.

Is a houseboat safe for children and seniors?

Yes. Boats move slowly on calm inland water, life jackets are on board, and the crew is used to families. The bedrooms are AC, with attached bathrooms. Choose a 2-bedroom boat for a family of four to six.

How long are the drives?

Between 3 and 5 hours on the main route, with stops. Kochi–Munnar 4 hours, Munnar–Thekkady 3½ hours, Thekkady–Alleppey 4 hours, Alleppey–Kochi 1½ hours. Roads are good but winding in the hills.

Can we add Kanyakumari or Rameswaram?

Yes — the Relaxed itinerary extends naturally: Kovalam to Kanyakumari is 90 km (2½ hours), and Rameswaram is a further day's drive into Tamil Nadu. Ask for a Kerala + Tamil Nadu pilgrimage version.

How far in advance should we book?

For December, Diwali or a group of 8+, two months. For other months, 3–4 weeks is enough to get good flight fares. Houseboats and Munnar hotels fill up first.

Classic Kerala

The route almost every first-time visitor takes, and for good reason: hills, forest and water in five nights with no drive longer than four hours.

5 nights / 6 days Route: **Kochi – Munnar – Thekkady – Alleppey – Kochi**

From **₹32,000** pp, indicative

Day

1

KOCHI → MUNNAR

Arrive and climb into the hills

Morning flight from Ahmedabad lands in Kochi by about 11 am. Our driver meets you and you head straight up to Munnar (130 km, 4 hours) with a lunch stop and a pause at Cheeyappara waterfalls. Check in by evening; the temperature drops to 15–18°C, so keep a light jacket handy.

Stay: **Munnar** · Meals: **Dinner**

Day

2

MUNNAR

Tea country

Eravikulam National Park early (opens 8 am; closed Feb–Mar for calving season), then the Tea Museum and a walk through the estates. Afternoon drive to Mattupetty Dam, Echo Point and Kundala Lake. Gujarati thali for dinner in town.

Stay: **Munnar** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

3

MUNNAR → THEKKADY

Spice forests

Leave after breakfast for Thekkady (110 km, 3½ hours) through cardamom and pepper plantations. Afternoon spice-garden walk, then the boat ride on Periyar Lake (book the 3:30 pm slot). Evening Kalaripayattu show is worth the ₹300 ticket.

Stay: **Thekkady** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

4

THEKKADY → ALLEPPEY

Onto the water

Descend to the plains (140 km, 4 hours) and board your private houseboat at Alleppey by 12:30 pm. The boat cruises the backwaters through the afternoon, anchors at sunset, and the on-board cook prepares dinner — we confirm pure-veg or Jain in writing beforehand.

Stay: **Houseboat** · Meals: **Lunch, Dinner**

Day
5

ALLEPPEY → KOCHI

Fort Kochi

Breakfast on the boat, disembark at 9 am and drive to Kochi (60 km, 1½ hours). Afternoon in Fort Kochi: Chinese fishing nets, St Francis Church, Mattancherry Palace. Evening Kathakali show at 6 pm, arrive at 5 pm to watch the make-up.

Stay: Kochi · Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day
6

KOCHI → AHMEDABAD

Fly home

Airport is 40 km from Fort Kochi; leave 3 hours before departure. Lulu Mall is on the way if you have time for shopping.

Stay: — · Meals: Breakfast

Included

- + Return Ahmedabad–Kochi flights
- + 5 nights in inspected 3★/4★ hotels and a private houseboat
- + Private AC vehicle for the whole trip
- + Daily breakfast and veg dinner; all meals on houseboat
- + Periyar boat ride and Eravikulam entry
- + Airport pickup and drop

Not included

- Lunches on sightseeing days
- Kathakali and Kalaripayattu tickets
- Travel insurance
- GST 5%

STANDARD

₹32,000–38,000

Per person, twin sharing

PREMIUM

₹48,000–60,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative, including flights at normal fares. Diwali and Christmas weeks run 20–30% higher.

Relaxed Kerala

Fewer hotel changes and a beach finish. Designed for families with senior parents or small children: three nights in Munnar, one on the water, three by the sea.

7 nights / 8 days Route: **Kochi – Munnar – Alleppey – Kovalam – Thiruvananthapuram**

From **₹45,000** pp, indicative

Day

1

KOCHI → MUNNAR

Arrive and climb into the hills

Fly Ahmedabad–Kochi, drive to Munnar (4 hours) with a lunch stop. Rest on arrival.

Stay: **Munnar** · Meals: **Dinner**

Day

2

MUNNAR

Tea Museum and lakes

A gentle day: Tea Museum, a short estate walk, Mattupetty Dam and Kundala Lake by car. Back at the hotel by 4 pm.

Stay: **Munnar** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

3

MUNNAR

Eravikulam or a free day

Optional early trip to Eravikulam National Park for those who want it; others enjoy the hotel, the town market and a spice shop visit. Ayurveda massage can be arranged.

Stay: **Munnar** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

4

MUNNAR → ALLEPPEY

Houseboat

Drive down to Alleppey (170 km, 5 hours — the longest drive of the trip, with a break at Kottayam). Board the houseboat by 1 pm; the afternoon is spent cruising.

Stay: **Houseboat** · Meals: **Lunch, Dinner**

Day

5

ALLEPPEY → KOVALAM

To the coast

Disembark at 9 am and drive south to Kovalam (160 km, 4 hours). Check into a beach resort. Evening walk on Lighthouse Beach.

Stay: **Kovalam** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
6

KOVALAM

Beach day

No plans. Pool, beach, Ayurveda, a boat ride at Poovar backwaters for those who want a half-day outing.

Stay: Kovalam · Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day
7

KOVALAM / THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Padmanabhaswamy Temple

Morning darshan at Padmanabhaswamy Temple (dhoti/saree provided; darshan timings 3:30–4:45 am, 6:30–7 am, 8:30–10 am, 10:30–11:10 am, 11:45 am–12 pm, 5–6:15 pm, 6:45–7:20 pm). Napier Museum and Kanakakunnu Palace gardens afterwards. Back to the resort for a last evening.

Stay: Kovalam · Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day
8

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM → AHMEDABAD

Fly home

Thiruvananthapuram airport is 15 km from Kovalam. Flights to Ahmedabad are usually one-stop via Mumbai or Bengaluru.

Stay: — · Meals: Breakfast

Included

- + Flights Ahmedabad–Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram–Ahmedabad
- + 7 nights in 4★ hotels, a beach resort and a private houseboat
- + Private AC vehicle throughout
- + Daily breakfast and veg dinner; all meals on houseboat
- + Temple visit arrangements including dress
- + Airport pickup and drop

Not included

- Lunches
- Ayurveda treatments and Poovar boat ride
- Travel insurance
- GST 5%

STANDARD

₹45,000–52,000

Per person, twin sharing

PREMIUM

₹65,000–85,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative. Beach resorts in Kovalam vary widely in price; the premium band assumes a sea-facing 5★ resort.

Munnar & Backwaters Short Break

A long-weekend version for couples or working families: one night each in the hills, on the water and in Kochi. Leave Friday morning, back Monday night.

3 nights / 4 days

Route: Kochi – Munnar – Alleppey – Kochi

From ₹24,000 pp, indicative

Day 1	KOCHI → MUNNAR Straight to the hills Early flight from Ahmedabad (the 6 am departure lands by 8:30 am). Drive to Munnar with a breakfast stop; afternoon at the Tea Museum and Echo Point. Stay: Munnar · Meals: Dinner
Day 2	MUNNAR → ALLEPPEY Sunrise in the tea, sunset on the water Early walk in the estates, then leave by 8 am for Alleppey (170 km, 5 hours). Board the houseboat by 1:30 pm. Stay: Houseboat · Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Day 3	ALLEPPEY → KOCHI Fort Kochi Disembark at 9 am, drive to Kochi. Fort Kochi walk, shopping at Jew Town, Kathakali in the evening. Stay: Kochi · Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Day 4	KOCHI → AHMEDABAD Fly home Morning or afternoon flight; Lulu Mall for last-minute shopping if the flight is late. Stay: — · Meals: Breakfast

Included

- + Return Ahmedabad–Kochi flights
- + 3 nights: hotel in Munnar, private houseboat, hotel in Kochi
- + Private AC vehicle
- + Breakfast and dinner daily; all meals on houseboat

Not included

- Lunches on land
- Show tickets
- Travel insurance
- GST 5%

STANDARD

₹24,000–28,000

Per person, twin sharing

PREMIUM

₹36,000–45,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative. Works best with the early-morning Ahmedabad–Kochi flight.

Want this booked properly?

Send this PDF to us on WhatsApp with your dates and the number of travellers. Hotel names and a firm price within 24 hours.

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