Backwaters at Sunset, Tea Hills at Sunrise — A 5-Day Kerala Itinerary

DURATION
5 Days

BEST TIME TO GO
October to January
cool, dry weather after the monsoon and before Eravikulam National Park's Feb–Mar closure for Nilgiri tahr breeding season

FROM
$680 USD / person
for 2 people sharing private transfers, hotels & an overnight houseboat; excludes flights to Kochi

Day 1 Arrive Kochi — Fort Kochi's Colonial Waterfront

Land at Cochin International Airport and transfer to Fort Kochi, where Portuguese, Dutch and British eras layer over each other along a spice-scented waterfront.

Airport Transfer: Cochin International Airport to Fort Kochi

~1 hour, 28 miles · private car ~$25 USD

A private car meets arriving flights at Cochin International Airport (COK) for the drive south into Fort Kochi's old town, crossing the harbor causeways as the backwaters open up on either side of the road.

Chinese Fishing Nets, Mattancherry Palace & Jew Town

~2.5 hours · palace entry ~$2 USD / adult

A walk along Fort Kochi's waterfront past the cantilevered Chinese fishing nets, introduced by Chinese traders in the 14th century and still worked by hand at day's end, continuing to the 16th-century Mattancherry (Dutch) Palace's Kerala murals and the spice traders' lanes of Jew Town.

Kathakali Performance: Kerala Kathakali Centre

~1.5 hours (make-up demo + show) · ~$6 USD / adult

An early-evening make-up demonstration followed by a staged excerpt of Kerala's centuries-old Kathakali dance-drama, its performers' elaborate face paint and costumes built up on stage before a story told entirely through expression and hand gesture.

Kerala Kathakali Centre · **keralakathakalicentre.org**

Check-In: Old Harbour Hotel

From $130 USD / night, for 2 people

A 300-year-old Dutch-Portuguese heritage building turned boutique hotel around a walled garden courtyard, a few minutes' walk from the fishing nets and Fort Kochi's old churches.

Old Harbour Hotel · **oldharbourhotel.com**

Top Station Viewpoint

~1.5 hours incl. drive · free

The highest point on the old Kochi–Madurai trade route, with views west over Munnar's tea terraces and east into Tamil Nadu's Kannan Devan hills — also the best-known viewing ground for the Neelakurinji flower that blankets these slopes blue-purple once every twelve years.

Mattupetty Dam Boating

~1 hour · speed boat ~$6 USD / adult

A short boat ride on the reservoir behind Mattupetty Dam, framed by tea-covered hills and grazing cattle from the neighboring Indo-Swiss dairy farm that has bred cattle here since the 1960s.

Dinner: Tea Valley Resort

~1.5 hours · dinner ~$15–$20 USD / person

The resort's own dining room serves home-style Kerala cooking — appam, stew and fresh-ground filter coffee — with the tea estate falling into darkness outside the windows.

Day 4 Munnar to Alleppey — Onto the Backwaters

Descend from the hills to the coastal plains for the trip's signature experience: a private houseboat cruising the palm-fringed backwaters of Alleppey overnight.

Private Transfer: Munnar to Alleppey

~4 hours, 90 miles via SH1 · private car ~$70 USD

The road drops out of the tea hills through rubber plantations and paddy villages, flattening out onto the coastal plain as the first backwater canals appear beside the highway.

Overnight Houseboat: Spiceroutes Boat House

From $150 USD / night, for 2 people, all meals included

A traditional kettuvallam rice barge converted into a private houseboat with a bedroom, sundeck and an onboard chef cooking fresh Kerala meals while the boat idles down narrow backwater canals past coir-making villages and flooded paddy fields.

Spiceroutes Boat House · **spiceroutes.in**

Sunset on the Backwaters

~1 hour · included with houseboat

The boat moors for the night in a quiet side canal as the light turns gold over the palm lines and canoes of local fishermen paddle past on their way home.

Day 5 Alleppey & the Flight Home

A final slow cruise through the backwaters at sunrise before disembarking and returning to Kochi for the flight home.

Morning Backwater Cruise

~1.5 hours · included with houseboat

The houseboat pushes off at sunrise for a last unhurried hour through the canals, with morning mist over the water and village life — laundry, fishing, ferry boats — unfolding along both banks before breakfast is served on deck.

Private Transfer: Alleppey to Cochin International Airport

~1.5 hours, 60 miles via NH66 · private car ~$40 USD

The drive back north to Cochin International Airport (COK) retraces the coastal highway, with time built in for check-in before an afternoon or evening flight.