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Kerala Houseboats â€“ Remodeled on Past Glory by Mahi Manral

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One cannot help but marvel at the wonder called Kerala. Such beautiful is Kerala with blessings of nature. With a panoramic landscape Kerala is akin to a piece of art done by God. It is endowed with various hues, shades and texture. Pristine beaches, scintillating hill stations, winding backwaters, exotic wildlife, verdant landscape and suave art forms â€“ the attractions Kerala offers are colorful, rich and diverse.

Out of all attractions, backwater is the one peculiar to Kerala. Nowhere else in the world will one find a similar phenomenon. Backwater is a labyrinth formed by canals and inlets which are both manmade and natural, estuaries of over forty rivers and five lakes. Backwater was a means of transportation for local folk before the advent of bridges, roads and ferries. They also depended on backwaters for means of livelihood such as agriculture and fishing. Thus backwater was of economic importance to local people. Backwater is continuing to play this economic role to perfection by earning millions by way of tourism. Backwaters make for fascinating setting and its fame is spread far and wide. Scores came in search of this illustrious beauty and cruise along backwaters is high on itineraries.

Although there are many ways of cruising in backwaters, houseboats are the latest fads in the realm of backwater tourism. Houseboats Kerala are moving luxurious havens adjoined with modern amenities akin that of a five star hotel. They are modeled on erstwhile â€œKettuvallamsâ€•. Kettuvallams once ruled backwaters poled along by one or two men. They were used to transport rice, coconut and other items from isolated interior villages of backwater area to towns like Alleppey, Kollam, Kochi and Kottayam. With the advent of modern transportation amenities they slowly faded off the scene. Now tourism has given them a new leeway in the form of houseboats. Kettuvallams came with thatched roofs over wooden hulls to offer protection from elements of nature. Although houseboats in Kerala are of the same form, largely unaltered - they are two to three storied affairs with one to five bedrooms included. Apart from sleeping space, dining space and a sit out open on all sides are provided. From this sit out, one can savor the exquisite charm of backwaters consisting of monuments, swaying coconut trees, emerald flora and lush green paddy fields, fishing nets, water flowers and various activities of life. A crew including a cook accompanies guests. The menu is usually indigenous variety with local fish included. But at the end of day the taste of guests prevails. Houseboats are adjoined with generators providing for air conditioning. Although houseboats are motorized, they are run at a meandering pace letting guests relish the surrounding landscape to the fullest.

Houseboat industry is flourishing in Alleppey, Kochi, Kollam and Kumarakom. Alleppey, slowly becoming a prime tourism destination has many attractions other than backwaters. Alleppey houseboats are the prominent means of exploring the backwaters of Alleppey. Houseboat in Alleppey slowly floats over the backwaters letting you savor the wonderments on the shores and backwaters like gothic churches, verdant landscape, coir villages, rustic homes, temples and sights like ducks being herded in waters, toddy makers tapping coconut trees, fishermen fishing etc.

Houseboats come in varying sizes. The average length of houseboats is ninety five to one hundred and fifteen feet and width thirteen to fifteen feet.

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