

KODUNGALLUR : Muziris, the fabulous ancient Indian port



The small country town of Kodungallur is situated 35 kilometres south of Thrissur, was known to the Greeks as Muziris and is a place immersed in rich history. Kodungallur, originally Kodilingapuram and (also English: Cranganore / K-town; Malayalam: കൊടുങ്ങല്ലൂർ; formerly known as Mahodayapuram, Muziris, etc.,) is a historically significant town situated on the banks of river Periyar on the Malabar Coast in Thrissur district of Kerala, India. Kodungallur is well connected to other towns in Kerala through the road network.

Nearest railway station: Irinjalakuda (20 km), Aluva Railway Station in Ernakulam district (28 km)

Nearest airport: Cochin International Airport, about 30 km

When Kerala established itself as a major center for spice, it was the ancient port of Muziris that emerged as its hub. Kodungallur, being a port city at the northern end of the Kerala lagoons, was a strategic entry point for the naval fleets to the extensive Kerala backwaters. The harbour was visited by navigators from all over the world, especially from the Mediterranean world. They called it the 'Rome of the East', a gateway into India and the site where one could witness the miraculous sight of the confluence of the Periyar River and the Arabian Sea. From being a legendary port in international maritime trade to the location where three major religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) first stepped on these shores, Kodungalloor (Kodungallur) has seen and experienced more than most places on the planet. The Greek stories called it Muziris, and we revere it today as one of the most culturally and historically significant destinations in all of God's Own Country.

Since the 15th century, the region began to come under the influence of foreign powers, starting with the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch and the British. Today, Kodungallur and the surrounding regions have various representations from a past that eventually had a say in the socio-cultural and religious aspects of the region. It is postulated that the harbour at Kodungallur was devastated by natural calamities—a flood or an earthquake, in 1341, and consequently lost its commercial/strategic importance thereafter.

Religion has an important role in the cultural synthesis of a society. The multi-colored carpet of Kerala society has been woven through centuries with Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian and Islamic elements co-existing without losing their identity or even their contrast in character. There were similarities in structure and sculptural patterns between Hindu temples, Christian churches and Muslims mosques.

Cheraman Juma Masjid:



On first glance, Cheraman Juma Masjid resembles a traditional Hindu temple, and this historic spot draws in devotees in large numbers to this day. Built in AD 629, it is the first mosque in India and the second in the world where Juma prayers were started. Situated just 2 km from Kodungalloor Town. It was built by Malik Deenar, Persian companion of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, on the orders of the successor of Cheraman Perumal, the Chera King of modern-day Kerala. The mosque was constructed in Kerala style with hanging lamps, making the historicity of its date claims more convincing.

St. Thomas Church:



A traditional belief among the ancient Christians in Kerala is that Apostle St. Thomas landed in or around Kodungallur in the middle of the 1st century CE and founded Seven Churches: Kodungallur, Niranam, Nilackal (Chayal), Kokkamangalam, Kottakkavu, Palayoor and Aruvithura – a "Royal Church".

Ruins of Kottappuram Fort:



This fort built by the Portuguese in 1523 A.D. is also known as Cranganore Fort. The Dutch took possession of it in 1661 and later it came under the control of Tipu Sultan. The Dutch wrested it back from Tipu Sultan, but the fort eventually came under the control of Tipu, who destroyed it in

the following year. The remains of the fort show that the original fort wall was 18 feet in thickness. The ruin is also known as Tipu's fort. The fort is about 2 km from the town of Kodungallur.

Kodungallur Bhagavathy Temple:



Kodungallur is well known in ancient times due to trade, and also due to the Bhagavathy kshethram. Kurumbakavu Bhagavathi Temple, popularly known as Kodungallur Bhagavathy Temple is located about 1.5 km southeast of the Kodungallur bus stand. It is assumed that the placement of the idol of Kannaki was done about 1800 years ago by Chera Chenkuttuvan of the Chera dynasty. This Maha Kali temple is one of the oldest functioning temples in India. This temple is the head of 64 Bhadrakali temples in Kerala especially Malabar.

Kodungallur Bharani Festival:



The annual festival at the Sree Kurumba Bhagavathy Temple situated at Kodungalloor is famous across Kerala and is known as the Kodungalloor Bharani. It takes place during the Malayalam month of Meenam (March-April). The main event of Bharani festival is the Aswathy Kaavutheendal, held on the day prior to Bharani asterism. This is the time where one can witness the largest congregation of oracles in the State. Oracles, both men and women, dash around the temple and smite their heads with their swords, proclaiming their communion with the Mother Goddess. The devotees strike the temple rafters with sticks and hurl offerings over the roof and on to the inner quadrangle. This is an extremely important festival, especially in Northern Kerala. Another important festival at this temple is the Navarathri.

As a land that has heartily welcomed representatives of various cultures and nations, Kodungallur has always been cosmopolitan in attitude. The Muziris Heritage Project was launched by the Government of Kerala's Department of Cultural Affairs in 2006 to "scientifically retrieve and preserve the historical heritage of the region, extending from North Paravur to Kodungallur.