



### **Arts of Kerala - a deeper exploration of our classical art forms**

Culture, especially classical performing arts of Kerala, is the *raison d'être* for Neelambari. The beautiful one of its kind *Koothambalam* that is central to the facility, its location in the cultural capital of Kerala surrounded by a rich tradition and legendary artistes, and the deep rooted passion of its promoters for the cultural treasure of Kerala all combine to make Neelambari the idea stopover for an enchanting acquaintance with the classical arts of Kerala. The arts of Kerala package is for the aesthetically inclined, who would like to scratch beneath the surface of the rich classical tradition of Kerala, and by extension India.

**Duration:** 5 nights

**Number of pax:** 10 - 16

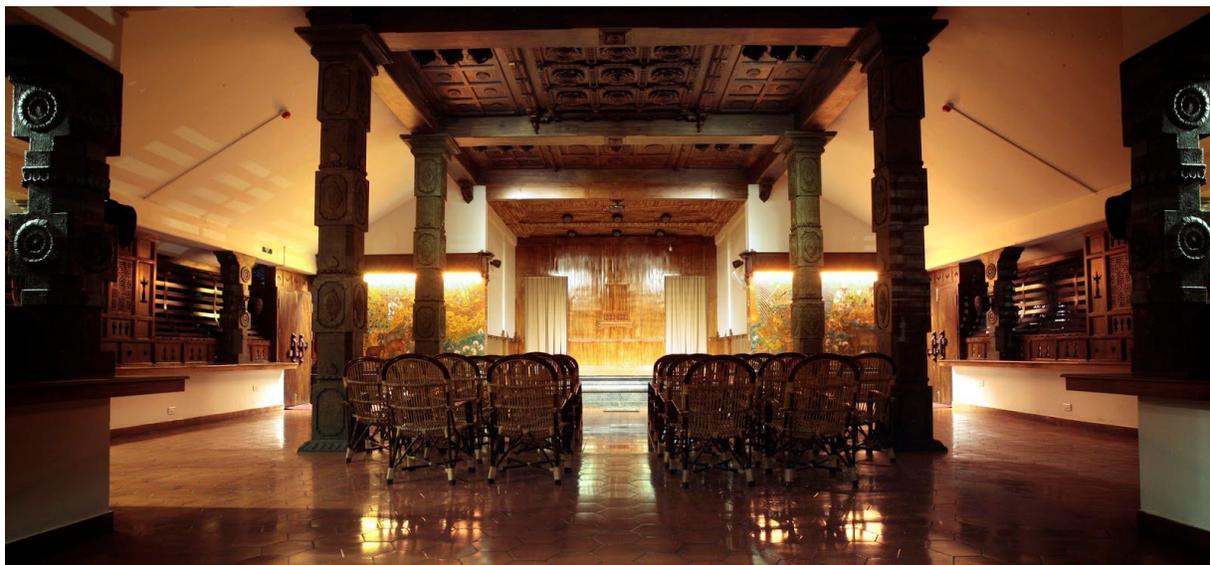
Day 1	Check in to Neelambari. No specific activity is scheduled on this date. An introduction to the facility will be provided with emphasis to its traditional performance theater ( <i>Koothambalam</i> ) and series of murals done in classical Kerala style.
Day 2	<u><i>Koodiyattam</i></u> : This Sanskrit theatre is one of the oldest extant art forms in the world and was recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Despite its ancient roots, Koodiyattam is surprisingly contemporary in its approach to theater, sensibility to characters and gender parity. The area around Neelambari is a haven for this classical art form, with prestigious institutions and acclaimed artistes making it their base. We will get introduced to the art form in a three four process - we will start with a multimedia presentation that summarizes the genesis and sensibilities of the art form. We will then visit a senior artiste (Guru) in her home and interact with the students and the Guru. Watching the Guru impart lessons to the students would give us insights into how an actor is groomed for the stage. We will follow this session by a lecture - demonstration on the art form performed by senior artistes. This session would help us view into the art form in a relatively easy and approachable format. We will conclude the day with a glorious performance in Neelambari's splendid traditional theater, the <i>Koothambalam</i> .



<p>Day 3</p>	<p><u><i>Kathakali</i></u>: Considered the face of Kerala culture, this musical-dance-drama with elaborate makeup for characters enchants laymen and connoisseurs alike. On this day, we will try to get close to this art form and take our first few steps from the former to the latter. We will begin the day with an early morning visit to <i>Kalanilayam</i>, a premier institute for the art form that has produced several stalwarts over the years. At Kalanilayam, we will watch a <i>Cholliyattam</i> (rigorous training session) in progress. Back in Neelambari, we will once again go through a multimedia presentation that explains the precepts of Kathakali and also perhaps draw attention to a few nuances. Following this we will go through a session where the elaborate makeup and costumes of Kathakali are introduced. We will conclude the day with a scintillating Kathakali performance in Neelambari's koothambalam.</p>
<p>Day 4</p>	<p><u><i>Mohiniyattam and Percussion arts</i></u>: While Kathakali and Koodiyattam are traditional theater arts of India, Mohiniyattam is its signature dance form. Though the dance form has a legacy of several centuries, like several other women-centric art forms, Mohiniyattam too faced a severe crisis during the British rule in India and had to be revised by a few determined souls in the twentieth century. While the artistes of present day still retain the enchanting structure and repertoire of the art form, they also boldly approach it with contemporary sensibilities and themes. We will have a multimedia introduction, lecture demonstration and performance.</p>



Kerala has a rich and highly evolved percussion tradition. *Chenda*, a simple but versatile drum is the mainstay instrument in most performances. While temple festivals usually have *melams*, large percussion orchestras that bring together more than hundred artistes, has its emphasis on harmony, *Thayampaka* another form with drums and cymbals emphasizes individual virtuosity. We will go through a lecture demonstration and performance session that brings out the mesmerizing rhythms of Kerala.



Day 5

Visit to Kalamandalam: There are a lot more art forms in Kerala that would be considered classical, semi-classical and folk. We would however pause our introduction here hoping that the participant has by now gained enough exposure to not feel at loss when viewing most art forms of Kerala (even India). On our final day instead we will set out on a journey to Kerala Kalamandalam, the premier institute that has played a pivotal role in reviving and nurturing our art forms in the decades since independence. This would not be just a journey to a great location, rather we will utilize the time to travel through the history and evolution of art forms and sensibilities in Kerala, against the backdrop of its social changes.

Notes:

1. The days order can be changed depending on weekday / weekend considerations.
2. We can offer a partial package that includes only some of the experiences listed above. Separate price can be provided depending on the experiences and number of days involved.
3. Subject to time constraints, we will intersperse village experiences on each day of program. These would include village walks, river cruise, cycling trips, interaction with farmers and craftsmen etc.