

kochi

has an equatorial climate due to the western ghats and arabian sea

Airport

The Kochi International Airport at Nedumbassery is 34km and a 45-minute drive away from Ernakulam. Get a prepaid taxi to Ernakulam for Rs 495 or Fort Kochi for Rs 635.

Must try

The Grand Pavilion Restaurant at the Grand Hotel (MG Road, Ernakulam, tel: (0484) 238 2061/236 6833) is patronised by the locals for its rice and fish curry combo. Its fresh-from-the stove fish moilee and chemmeen ularthiyathu are also tasty.

Must see

The Pardesi (Jewish) synagogue in Mattanchery, Fort Kochi, with its Belgian chandeliers, separate women's gallery and 1,100 hand-painted blue willow patterned floor tiles from China.

Must buy

Hand-crafted wood, banana fibre, kora grass, cane, bamboo, coconut and conch shells from Surabhi (Jose Junction, MG Road, Ernakulam, tel: (0484) 237 7063/2237 7978), which has more than 100 co-operative societies representing 30,000 artisans.

Must watch

Head to See India Foundation (Kalathil Parambil Lane, near Junction station, tel: (0484) 237 6471), the oldest kathakali theatre in Kerala. Shows run 6.45pm-8pm.

Must stay

The ancestral mansion of the Kochi Koders (the uncrowned business czars of Kochi for over a century) has been refurbished into a hotel with a striking red façade and suites with antique furniture (Tower Road, Fort Kochi, tel: (0484) 221 8485, www.koderhouse.com; contact Vicky Raj, tel: 98470 05332). Susheela Nair



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the qutab minar is the world's tallest brick minaret
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