

Alleppey to Kollam: the Kerla Backwaters (3/3/2008-2/8/2008)

The main purpose of most people who visit Alleppey and Kollam is to explore the series of lakes, canals, rivers, and bays that make up the famed Kerala backwaters, a labyrinth of waterways through rice patties and palm orchards. There are a number of ways to see the backwaters, the most expensive (which I passed on) is to rent a houseboat built in the style of old rice barges. The cheapest is to hop on and off the local ferries that connect water bound settlements to the major cities. A method I used to see much of the area around Alleppey. In the middle, economically speaking, are the tourists' cruises, the most famous of which is the 8 hour boat ride from Alleppey to Kollam, which I also took. It gave a bit more variety of landscape than the ferry rides, but in truth it's all pretty repetitive. My final foray into the backwaters was to the rural area known as Munroe Island near Kollam. Tourist are taken out to the area by car or rickshaw and then paddled by small row boat through the narrow canals. It was actually much less touristy than I expected, although a couple kids were shouting for pens from the water's edge.

I wasn't extremely impressed with the backwaters, despite having working on lowering my expectations once I had gotten to Kerla and seen the rural landscape in the north. It was pleasant enough, but when compared to a similar area, such as the Mekong delta in Vietnam, a lot less interesting and less photogenic. With the increasing number of roads crisscrossing the area, it seems that the backwaters are becoming less and less central to the daily lives of the people. Especially around Alleppey the most common boats on the water are the tourist house boats. Nevertheless I managed to occupy my time with boat trips and walks around town, even squeezing in a haircut which was long over do. I also ran across another temple festival in Kollam. This one was related to the harvest and women lined the streets cooking a sweet type of rice in clay pots with offerings laid out in front of them on banana leaves.



Backwaters near Alleppey.



**Schoolgirl on the ferry
between Kottayam and
Alleppey.**



**Tourist Houseboat on
backwaters near Alleppey.**



Church, backwaters near Alleppey.



Backwaters near Alleppey.



Backwaters between Alleppey and Kollam.



Backwaters between Alleppey and Kollam.



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Backwaters between Alleppey and Kollam.



Backwaters between Alleppey and Kollam.



Backwaters between Alleppey and Kollam.



Church, Backwaters near Kollam.



Backwaters near Kollam.



Munroe Island backwaters, near Kollam.



Elephant in town for a local temple festival, Munroe Island backwaters, near Kollam.



Munroe Island backwaters, near Kollam.



Munroe Island backwaters, near Kollam.



Munroe Island backwaters, near Kollam.



Little girl next to low budget movie poster, Kollam.



Festival, Kollam.



Festival, Kollam.



Festival, Kollam.



Festival, Kollam.



Festival, Kollam.



Festival, Kollam.



Cooking sweet rice for festival, Kollam.