

For bliss-starved souls

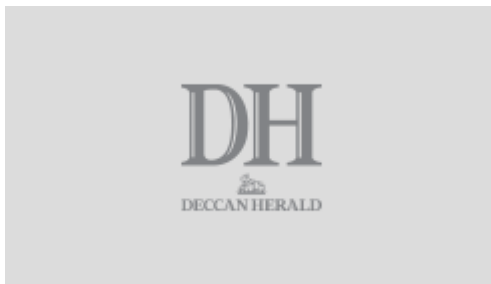
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Alleppey greets me with open arms. The lush Kerala landscape flaunts its splendour everywhere. The eternal resonance of gently flowing water sets the pace for unhurried days.

The rhythmic swish-swish of palms draws one deeper into the folds of this pristine land. The clear blue above turns spectacularly kaleidoscopic at sunrise and sundown. And at night, the darkness is studded with the light of a thousand glow worms.

The resort I was put up in is a two-hour drive from the Alleppey railway station. The sudden greenery of Kerala overwhelms the senses as you ride through quaint, scenic villages — your coir mattress most likely came from here. The only way to get to the resort or to the cottages on the other end is through boats. Venice of the East, oh yes! A canoe ride around the lake during the day or at sunset is a must do.

The vista is absolutely awe inspiring. The expanse of the glassy waters reaching the horizon and the verdant fringes of the lush land tipping into the lakes are a dream interspersed with the sight of people busy doing their daily chores and children running along, chortling — it is an exhilarating experience.

A walk through the village of Thrikunnapuzha is fascinating. Every household is engaged in spinning coir — the husk of coconut, which is used to make ropes. As you step into the quiet village, an invitation into a home will soon follow and you will end up trying your hand at making some coir. And it is not as easy as it looks.

You could take long walks on these traffic-free roads for a glimpse into the tranquil village life. We walked till we suddenly touched the main road. Soon, a roadways bus came along and unhesitatingly we got on to take a ride to the marketplace for three rupees.

And if you are in the mood to explore a little, a two-hour drive will take you to the Alleppey beach, which is beautiful at sundown but very mela-like. The Krishnapuram Palace and museum, which houses a 50 square meter mural, the largest in Kerala, is engaging, if a little far. The R-Block areas where paddy is cultivated in land reclaimed from the backwaters, almost four to ten feet below sea level, can be viewed from a cruise.

Also, 30 km away, at Haripad, is the famous Sree Nagaraja Temple, a shrine for the king of serpents. It is headed by women priests and set within acres of lush forest.
