

# BRIEF HISTORY

Idukki, one of the mountaneous districts of the state came into existence on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1972 as per Government Notification No. 54131/C2/71/RD dated 24<sup>th</sup> January 1972. Idukki is greatly known for the splendid green mountains, streams and spices. It is also a main tourist destination in Kerala with its hill stations, surrounded by lush hills and tea plantations and its valleys. Idukki district named after the mighty Idukki Hill and also after the Hydroelectric Project. The double curvature Arch Dam is the highest of its kind in Asia and in regard to heights it comes the second in the country. Idukki, the second largest district of the State has an area of 4517.9 Sq. Km (Excluding Kuttampuzha), which constitute 11.6% of the total area of the state. It is one of the districts in the state, which has a number of wild life sanctuaries and facilities for Hirange tourism, if infrastructure facilities and proper promotional activities are provided. It is also famous for its spices production, tea plantations and rubber cultivation. Idukki is one of the districts in the state where linguistic minority exists. The linguistic minority is mainly in Tamilian population. They are mainly workers in the tea and cardamom plantations, spread in Peermade, Udumbanchola and Devikulam taluks. The district is highly heterogeneous in the matter of its people in their culture, climate, cropping pattern, physiographic features etc. Both rainshadow and rain sodden area exists in the district.

## Physical Features

The district was formed by carving out portions from erstwhile Ernakulam and Kottayam district. Devikulam , Udumbanchola and Peermade taluks of erstwhile Kottayam district and Thodupuzha Taluk of Ernakulam District (excluding Kallorkkad village and portion of Manjalloor village). It is bounded by Trichur, Kottayam, Ernakulam and Pathanamthitta districts of Kerala and Coimbatore, Madurai and Ramanathpuram districts of Tamilnadu. It extends by 115 KM from South to North and 67 KM from East to West. The district lies between 9 degree 15 minutes and 10 degree 21 minute of north Latitudes and 76 degree 37 minutes and 77 degree 25minutes of Longitudes. It has definite physical characteristics. A Major portion of the district is covered by dense forest and extensive tea, coffee and cardamom plantations. Nearly 96% of the total area of the district comes under the high land area covered by rugged mountain ranges, hills and deep valleys. The district has no low land and there is only a small trip of( 184 Sq. KM) Midland area towards the western part of Thodupuzha Taluk. Administration of Kuttampuzha village is recently transferred to Ernakulam district. Due to this Idukki becomes the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest district of the state.

Periyar, Thaliar and Thodupuzhayar are the three important rivers of this district. Periyar which is 227 KM long is the second largest river of Kerala which originates from Sivagiri in the south east part of the district touches all the taluks of the district. Among the districts of Kerala, Idukki has the largest area under forest. The entire eastern side of the district is covered with dense forests and they fall in five Forest divisions viz. Chalakudy, Malayattoor, Munnar, Kottayam and Game Sanctuary. As per official records more than 50% of the area is under forest. But the actual area under forest may be around 30 %, due to illegal deforestation and colonisation. Agricultural sector is pre dominant by perennial crops like Cardamom, Tea, Rubber, Coconut, pepper etc. Area under paddy is very limited in this district.

## **History**

The early history of the district is obscure and there is no clear evidence about the paleolithic age. The burials in the Hiranges dates back to the Megalithic period. Some historians believe that Kuzhumur, the capital Sangam age is the present Kumily in Peermade taluk. During 800 –1102 A.D, the Hiranges consisting of present Devikulam , Udumbanchola and Peermade taluks were part of the Kingdom of Vembolinad. During 16 th Century Major portions of Idukki district came under the rule of Poonjar Raja.

The Modern history of the district starts with the advent of European planters to this region. In 1877 Kerala Varma , the Raja of Poonjar sold 227 Sq. Miles of Kannan Devan hills to John Danial Manroe, a British Planter. The tract was largely unexplored and covered with thick forest. He formed the North Travancore Land planting and Agriculture society. The members of the society developed there own estates in various parts of Hiranges . Roads were opened, Transport organised, Houses and factories built and productions rose rapidly in the succeeding years. The pallivasal Hydroelectric Project, the first hydroelectric project of the State was initially constructed by the tea companies for the industrial use. Planters were the first migrants to the high range region covered by dense forest. Deforestation process start in the high ranges with advent of the plantation industry by the end of the 19 th century. Vast area of evergreen forest were destroyed in connection with the construction of several hydroelectrical projects, Roads, factories etc..

## **Administrative Divisions**

There are four taluks viz. Devikulam, Udumbanchola, Peermade and Thodupuzha and 65 villages in the district. Only one Municipal town in the district is Thodupuzha. Munnar is census town. The largest village is Kannan Devan Hillsof Devikulam taluk with an area of 557 Sq. KM and smallest Kudayathoor village of Thodupuzha with an area of 21 Sq. KM.

There are eight community development Blocks viz. Devikulam, Adimali, Nedumkandom, Azhutha, Kattappana, Idukki, Elamdesom and Thodupuzha. There are 52 Panchayaths in the district. Thodupuzha is the only Municipality and Idukki is the only township in the district. Kumily panchayat of Azhutha block is the largest in the district with an area of 795.28 Sq. KM and Edavetty Panchayath in Thodupuzha block is the smallest panchayat of the district with an area of only 18.92Sq. KM. The district headquarters started functioning at Kottayam and shifted to Painavu in June 1976.

## **Topography and Climate Features**

Idukki, the hilly district of the state, has many unique topographical and geographical characteristics. The hiranges vary in altitude from 2500 feet above the mean sea level in Kulamavu to more than 5000 feet above the MSL in Munnar. There are eleven peaks in this district, which exceed a height of 6000 feet above the MSL. The highest peak in Kerala, Anamudy is in the K.D.H village of Devikulam taluk . Two types of soil are found in the district. The High land area is covered by forest soil (Alluvial soil) and the other parts by laterite soil.

The climate in the district undergoes a sudden variation as we go from west to east. The highland regions is having a comparatively cold climate. Munnar, Devikulam, Pallivasal, Vellathooval etc. are places getting high rainfall while Marayoor, Kanthalloor, Vattavada, Thaliar etc

experience low rainfall. Marayoor and Kanthalloor are virtually rainshadow areas lying the eastern side of western ghats.

## Demography

The total area of the district is 4499 Sq.K.M with a population of 11.28 lakhs. The district accounts for 12.91% of the geographical area of Kerala State, while the population of the district is only 3.7% of the state. Since most of the parts of the district are covered by dense forests and plantations there is lesser area for habitation compared to other district in the state. In 1901 the population was nearly 48000 and during in 1991, it has grown up by 22.46 times. On a comparison of the growth of population of the district with that of the state it can be seen that growth rate of the district has shown a higher percentage increase then the corresponding state increase. The decinial growth rates of the district especially during the decade 1921-31 and 1951-61 with 72.59% and 74.98% respectively, were much higher than the corresponding state figures of 21.85 and 24.76. A fluctuating trend is seen in the growth rates of population. Since 1901, with the growth rates for 1901-11 as 108.88%, 1911-21 as 9.239, 1921-31 as 72.59, 1931-41 as 30.17, 1941-51 as 35.67, 1951-61 as 74.98, 1961-71 as 31.75 and 1971-81 as 26.91%. 1981-91 as 10.95%, In the present decade growth rate is 4.64 %.

Coming to the taluk wise growth of population, Udumbanchola taluk has the largest population increase during 1921-71 with 4069.89%. During 41-51 it was 40.61%. But the decadel increase during 1951-61 is 675.75 %. In the three decades prior to1951 census, as compared to other taluks, Peermade taluk had the highest decennial growth rate but during post 1951 census period, Udumbanchola taluk had the privilege of having the highest growth rate among the other taluks of the district.

The migration to the highland region started before the formation of Kerala at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tamilians came as plantation workers of the European planters in Peermade, Udumbanchola and Devikulam taluks. Since most part of the district is covered with dense forests and plantations, there is lesser area for habitation. A large scale of conversion of forest area into arable lands resulted in the increase in population in the Udumbanchola and eastern part of Thodupuzha Taluk due to the establishment of gigantic hydroelectric project in Thodupuzha taluk and as a consequence to the Grow More Food Campaign in the state.

Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population assume some important position in the district. As per 2001 Census 14.11% of the total population belong s to SC and 4.51% belongs to ST group. On Block wise comparison it is seen that 28.51% of total SC population belong to Azhutha Block and 33.57% to DevikulamBlock and ST population is highly concentrated in Devikulam, Elamdesom and Idukki blocks.

Urban population in this district is only 4.1% of the total population. Density of population is 1306 Sq. Km. in Thodupuzha Municipality. The density of population is above 500/ Sq.Km. in Elamdesom and Thodupuzha Block. Azhutha block has the low density of 135/ Sq.Km. Vattavada panchayat has the lowest density of 75/Sq.Km.

## **Transport and Communications**

There are twelve state high ways passing through the district. There are two National High ways, namely NH - 49 and NH - 220 passes through the district. The railway does not pass through the district and nearest railway stations are Eranakulam, Kottayam and Alwaye. Nearest Port is Cochin Port and Nedumbassery, the International Airport is near to the northern boundary of the district. Transport and Communication, Medical and Educational facilities are poor compared to other districts. Agriculture is the main resources of the district and above 50% of the revenue earnings of the district is from the above sector.

## **Electricity and Power**

Idukki is the district having the largest hydroelectric power potential. The Periyar River and its tributaries provide the required infrastructure for generating power.

Periyar River in a narrow gorge between two granite hills (Kuravan and Kurathi hills) is the second highest in the country. Idukki, the double curvature arch dam, is the highest of its kind in Asia. Attached to this dam of 650 feet length and 550 feet height, two other dams are also there in Kulamavu and Cheruthony. The spillway of Idukki Reservoir is Cheruthony dam. The waterspread of Idukki Reservoir is about 60 Sq. KM and at a height of 701 Meter above mean sea level. The power station is located at Moolamattom and the underground power house beneath Nadukani hills. It was commissioned on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1976 by the then Hon. Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi. This single project powers almost half of the entire state and some parts of neighbouring states.

The Pallivasal hydroelectric project commissioned in 1939 utilising the waters of Mudirampuzha river, the important tributary of Periyar is the first power station of the State with an installation capacity of 13500 K.W. The Sengulam hydroelectric project is situated about 9 K.M down stream of Pallivasal Project in Mudirampuzha River. 21.25 M.W Power is generated from this project. The Neriamangalam and Periyar hydroelectric Projects are the other projects.

Panniyar hydroelectric project is developed on Panniyar, a tributary of Mudirampuzha River. Two Reservoirs, an upper Reservoir at Anayirankel and lower Reservoir at Ponmudi. Neriamangalam hydroelectric project utilises the tail waters of Sengulam power station and Panniyar power station and to excess catchment of Mudirampuzha River below Munnar. The power station is at Panamkutty.

Lower Periyar hydroelectric project envisages utilisation of the tail waters from the existing Neriamangalam power station and the spill from Kallarkutty head works.

## **Places of Importance**

**1. Idukki :** Famous for the first double curvature Arch dam in India and wild life sanctuary. Attached to Idukki dam there are two other dams Kulamavu and Cheruthony. Idukki Reservoir is formed by these three dams. The underground power station is at Moolamattom beneath Nadukani hills. The sanctuary formed in 1978 spread over Thodupuzha and Udumbanchola taluks and located 40 K.M from Thodupuzha town. Idukki wild life sanctuary spread over an area of 7700 hectares with plenty of wild animals. The Malankara Lake spread over about 11sq.k.m in Thodupuzha – Moolamattom route (6 K.M from Thodupuzha)

**2. Thekkady** : Thekkady is one of the finest wild life reserves in India – the Periyar wild life sanctuary spread over an area of 777 Sq. K.M of which 360 sq. K.M is thick ever green forest. The Periyar wild life sanctuary was declared as a Tiger Reserve in 1978. The Mullaperiyar Dam built across the river Periyar with Surki mix before 111 years , still exist as a wonder to the tourists.

**3. Mangaladevi Temple**: The temple is located 15 K.M. from Thekkady. The ancient temple built in Pandian style stands in the dense forest at the top of a peak 1337 Meter above the sea level. It situates in Tamil Nadu - Kerala boundary. The visitors are allowed on the Chithrapournami festival day. The peak commands a panoramic view of the eastern slopes of the Western ghats and the towns and villages of Tamilnadu.

**4. Vandiperiyar** : This town situated 18 K.M from Thekkady which lies in the Kottayam Kumily Road. The river periyar flowing through the centre of this town nourishes its vast area. This is an important commercial centre in High ranges

**5. Peermade**: Peermade, the famous plantation town, takes its name from the Muslim saint Peer Muhammed, a close associate of the erst while royal family of Travancore. The tomb of Peer Muhammed is situated at Kuttikkanam about 6 K.M from Peermade. Peermade is an important health resort

**6. Thodupuzha**: The Head quarters of Thodupuzha taluk is situated in the banks of Thodupuzha river. This is a place of historical importance. Karikode near Thodupuzha was the headquarters of Vadakkumkur Raja, where there is the remains of a fort Devi temple and Ninar Mosque constructed by Vadakkumkur Raja. The famous Annamalai temple dedicated to Lord Shiva constructed in Chola style architecture is also located at Karikode. The church at Muthalakodam near Thodupuzha is believed to have constructed before 13<sup>th</sup> century.

**7. Thommankuthu**: Thommankuthu is a chain of cascades 17 K.M from Thodupuzha. This is a remote place with beautiful scenery of seven step water fall. This is developing to an important Tourist spot in the district.

**8. Munnar**: Situated 55 K.M from Idukki Town at an elevation of 1524 Mtrs. in above the mean sea level and on the confluence of three mountain streams Kannimalayar, Nallathanni and Kundala. It is a health resort especially in summer season. It is the centre of Tea Industry and also the Head quarters of the Kannan Devan Hill produce Company (now owned by Tata Tea Company). Munnar also has the highest peak in South India, Anamudi.

**9. Mattupetty**: The Indoswiss Project for the development of livestock is located at Mattupetty, 15 K.M from Munnar. The Mattupetty lake and Kundala dam are other attraction. It is known for its highly specialised diary farm.

**10. Eravikulam National Park** : (15 K.M North of Munnar) The 97 Sq. K.M park is situated in the Devikulam taluk and is home to the Nilgiri Tahr. The Anamudi peak is located in the southern region of the part. The park is divided into three regions. The core area, the butter area and the tourism area. Visitors are allowed only to the tourism area, which is the Rajamala region. The Eravikulam was declared as a National Park in 1978.

**11. Rajamala:** Part of Eravikulam wild life sanctuary 14 K.M from Munnar. The rare species popularly known as ‘Neelakurinji’ widely grows here. It blossoms in every 12 years. It attracted thousands of tourists this year. It has the largest population of Nilgiri Tahr (‘Varayadu’) existing in the world.

**12. Pallivasal:** 8 K.M from Munnar is the venue of the first hydroelectric project in Kerala and place for immense scenic beauty.

**13. Marayoor:** Situated 42 K.M North easts to Munnar, and an important place in Munnar - Udumalpetta Road. There is a megalithic burrial sites consisting of dolments and cists. This is a remote village of Devikulam taluk on the eastern slope of Western Ghats. This is the only place in Kerala where exotic sandalwood forests can be seen.

**14. Chinnar wild life sanctuary :** Chinnar wild life sanctuary having an area of 90.4 22 Sq. K.m is located in the rainshadow region on either side of Marayoor-Udumalpetta road. This is the second habitat of the endangered giant grizzled squirrel of India. The location of the sanctuary offers the unique advantage of watching its fascinating wild life at close quarters from the road without venturing deep into the jungle.

**15. Ramakkalmedu :** Located about 16 K.M from Nedumkandom on Munnar-Thekkady route. The hamlet bordering Tamil Nadu gives a panoramic view of Tamil Nadu villages and towns around Bodi and Cumbum on the eastern side of Western Ghats, the proposed site for power generation from winds.

**16. Nadukani Tower** (Near Moolamattom) : Panoramic view of Moolamattom Power house, hills and villages over a vast area of Thodupuzha taluk is available from this tower.

**17. Kalvari Mount**( Between Idukki & Kattappana) : An enchanting atmosphere with a charming view of Idukki Reservoir from Idukki to Ayyappancovil on one side of the hill and Panoramic view of Kamakshy and Mariyapuram panchayats on the other side .

**18. Meenuliyanpara;** Only pedestrain path for about 10 K.M from Mullaringad in Vannappuram Panchayath from where we can see Cochin Port and parts of Trichur district. An enchanting atmosphere and natural beauty.

**19. Malankara Dam :** The Dam is constructed across Thodupuzha river, 6 K.m from Thodupuzha for irrigation purpose as a part of Muvattupuzha Valley Irrigation Project. The tail water from Moolamattom Power house is stored here. The banks of the Reservoir can be developed to a beautiful tourist attraction. The irrigation Department plans to landscapethe dam and also set up a garden to boost tourism.

**20. Vattavada :** The border place of Kerala and Tamilnadu known for its variety of vegetable cultivation such as Mulberry,Plum, Cabbage, Carrot, Potato etc. The only place in kerala where wheat is cultivated. The lackcity of transportation facilities adversely affecting the lives of the peoples and its developmental activities.

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# DISTRICT AT A GLANCE

## General Features

Date of Formation	26 <sup>th</sup> January 1972	
District Head Quarters	Painave	
II. Administrative set-up		State
1. Number of Revenue Divisions	2	21
2. Number of Taluks	4	63
3. Number of Revenue Villages	64	1452
4. Number of Corporations	-	5
6. Number of Municipalities	1	53
7. Number of Municipality Wards	32	1756
8. Number of Block Panchayat	8	152
8. Number of Block Panchayat Wards	96	2004
9. Number of Grama Panchayat	52	999
10. Number of Grama Panchayat Wards	750	16139
11. Number of District Panchayat Wards	16	339
12. Number of Assembly Constituencies	5	140
13 Number of Parliament constituencies	1	20

## Geographical particulars

1. Total Area (Sq.Km)	4358	38863
Wet Area (Hect.)	5536	462797
Dry Area (Hect.)	219022	2273603