

FAQs

1. What are the primary building materials used in Kerala architecture

- The availability of granite -a strong and durable building stone is restricted mainly to the highlands and marginally to some hilly zones. Accordingly, the skill in quarrying, dressing and sculpturing of stone is scarce in Kerala.
- Soft lateritic stone available at shallow depth can be easily cut, dressed and used as building blocks. It is a local stone that gets stronger and durable with exposure to the atmosphere
- Timber remains the prime structural material abundantly available in Kerala, in many varieties - from bamboo to teak and rosewood. The skilful choice of timber, artful assembly and delicate carving of wood work for columns, walls and roofs frames are the unique characteristics of Kerala architecture, using accurate fit of joints.
- Clay was used in many forms - for walling, in filling the timber floors and making bricks and tiles after firing in kilns, tempered with admixtures.
- Palm leaves are still used effectively for thatching the roofs and for making partition walls and along with mud

2. Write a few lines on vernacular residential architecture in Kerala

- There are five types of traditional domestic architecture or Veedu in Kerala, namely:
- The humble house, unknown by any building treatise of Kerala, belongs to ordinary folks and tribal people/ adivasis (cheri, chala, kudi, varyyam or pisharam or pumatham);
- The Ekasala, an I-shaped single rectangular hall house, belongs to farmers or middle-class non-farmers; (3) the Nalukettu, a courtyard house, belongs to landlords;
- The great mansion Ettukettu and Patinjarukettu (double ettukettu) or much bigger structures, belong to very rich landlords;
- Commoner houses are simple ordinary houses scattered abundantly in the cities and villages.

3. Describe the influence of climate on vernacular architecture of Kerala

- Kerala has a **warm humid climate**. The **rainfall is very heavy** from south west and north east monsoons. To keep the rain and sun away from the walls the roofs of the building come down very low. They have verandah all round the building protecting the external walls from sun and rain. The width of the verandah varies from 2 ft to 12ft. In rooms where people spend most of their time during day the window openings were brought in at ground level otherwise the windows were small so that there was only subdued light inside or had timber jaalis to give diffused light without glare.
- They also have an **internal courtyard** for better flow of air.

4. Discuss the design features of Nayar houses of Kerala

- Houses of the Nayar's – an important ruling community who they lived in **mansions** which were mostly grouped together and called as **the Tharavad** (also the name of the joint family system) based on the “nalukettu” as its unit
- Nalukettu architecture is basically a rectangular shaped structure wherein four halls are joined together with an **inner courtyard** called 'Nadumuttam' which faces the open sky.
- The four halls on the sides are named Vadakkini (Northern block), Kizhakkini (Eastern block), Thekkini (Southern block) and Padinjatti (Western block).
- Many believe that this form of architecture have been inspired from **the “Pagodas”** of South Asia and Aryan Culture.
- The union of four blocks is vital in Nalukettu. The **open courtyard** to which these four blocks face is also very important when it's considered in terms of dimensional ratios and size.

5. Discuss the design features of the Namboothiri houses in Kerala

- They are concentrated primarily in Trichur, Palghat districts in south Malabar and as small clusters in Kottayam, Cannanore and some parts of North Malabar
- The illams of the affluent Nambudiri families of Trichur are self contained complex of buildings in a wide secluded compound.
- The complex consists of one or two storied Nalukettu building, an entrance gate (Padipura), one or more tanks for bathing
- Optional buildings such as a Granary, a Kitchen for feeding guests and a Shrine or a Temple itself.
- There are four wings Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western.
- The built structures were on the southern and the western wings