

Distance to Sabarimala

There are four main approaches to the Sabarimala Sri Sastha Temple.

1. Erumeli to Sabarimala (via) Kalaketty, Azhutha, Inchipra, Karimala, Pampa- 45 kilometres (traditional route by walking).
2. Kottayam to Pamba (via) Erumeli and from Pamba to Sabarimala (by foot) 136 kilometres.
3. Kottayam to Pamba (via) Manimala and there to Sabarimala 116 Kilometres.
4. Vandiperiyar to Mount Estate by vehicle and there by walking to Sabarimala.
Vandiperiyar to Kozhikanam 15 kilometres.
Kozhikanam to Uppupara 10 kilometres.
Uppupara to Sabarimala 3.5 Kilometres (Climb Down on foot).

Nearest Railway Stations are Kottayam and Chengannur.

Nearest Airport is Cochin (Angamally)

Route	Distance
Erumeli to Pamba	80 km
Kottayam to Erumeli (via) Kanjirapally	55 km
Kottayam to Erumeli (via) Manimala	54 km
Kottayam to Pamba (via) Manimala	116km
Kottayam to Pamba (via) Thiruvalla (Kozhencherry, Vadasserikkara)	119 km
Kottayam to Pamba (via) Thiruvalla	123 km
Chengannur to Pamba	93 Km
Ernakulam to Pamba (via) Kottayam	200 km
Allappy to Pamba (via) Ac Road	137 km
Punalur to Pamba	101 km
Pathanathitta to pamba	65 km
Thiruvananthapuram to Pamba	180 km
Ernakulam to Erumeli (via) Vaikkam, Pala, Ponkunnam	121km

The Temple legend

The World famous Sastha temple at Sabarimala is in Pathanamthitta District and located on the slope of the Western Ghats. The Annual pilgrimage begins in the month of Tamizh Month of Karthigai (Malayala Month of Viruchikham) which Starts from November Mid and ends in Tamizh Month Margazhi Karthigai (Malayala Month of Makaram) which is January Mid.

Sree Dharma Sastha Temple, Sabarimala

Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple, dedicated to Lord Iyappa, is the most famous and prominent among all the Sastha temples. The temple is situated on a hilltop (about 3000 feet above sea level) named Sabarimala in Pathanamthitta district, which is unique in many respects. The uniqueness gathers its voice, as the temple is open to all, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. There is a place near the temple; east to Sannidhanam, dedicated to the Vavar (a sufi and friend of Lord Iyappa) which is called 'Vavarunada', an epitome of religious harmony. Another interesting fact is that it is not open throughout the year. It is open for worship only for the first five days of every Malayalam month and during the days of Mandalapooja, Makaravilakku, Panguni Uthiram and Chitra Vishu. It is a custom that the pilgrims have to follow Viradham for 41 days(One Mandalam) to cleanse their minds before going to Sabarimala. The journey to the temple is to be taken through difficult paths in the forest as the vehicles can go only up to Pampa.

This is one of the most ancient temples in Kerala. It is believed that the deity of the temple was sanctified by Lord Parasu Rama at the foot of Sabari hills for which reference has been made even in Ramayana. The temple attracts pilgrims not only from the southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh but also from other parts of country and abroad.

There is Vavar Nada very close to. The deity is Vavar, the friend of Iyappa and a Sufi saint is at the close proximity to the main temple. Iyappa cult gifts much importance for secularism and communal harmony and has turned out to be a model for the whole world. Another significant aspect of the pilgrimage is that all the pilgrims whether rich or poor, literate or illiterate are all equal before Lord Iyappa and all of them address each other as Iyappa or Swamy.

Sabarimala is believed to be the place where Lord Iyappa meditated soon after killing the powerful demon, Mahishi. Another mythology says that its 'Parasu Rama Maharshi' who uplifted Kerala from the sea by throwing his axe and installed the idol of Iyappa at Sabarimala.

To enter the Sabarimala temple, the pilgrim has to pass Pathinettampadi (holy eighteen steps). The holy eighteen steps that lead to the shrine have been figuratively called Ponnu Pathinettampadi, 'Ponnu' being an epithet to denote the holy touch of lord's feet. But now 'Ponnu' has become literally true because the steps have been covered with Panchaloham. Each of these eighteen holy steps represents a desire one must conquer in life, it is believed. Only those who observe 41 days of austerity as ritual can only carry erumudi and can climb these holy steps.

Erumeli Sastha Temple

Erumeli Sastha temple, an important meeting place enroute the pilgrimage to Sabarimala is very famous. There is also a mosque very close by. Everyone goes to Sabarimala after worshipping at these two places, which seems of a symbol of Hindu - Muslim unity. The pilgrims usually go to Sabarimala after Petta-Thullal a ritual at Erumeli. The pilgrimage to Sabarimala without Petta-Thullal and worship at above mentioned temples are not considered traditional. Erumeli temple rests about 38 kilometres south of Kottayam.

The nearest railway station is Kottayam.

Pandalam Valiyakoyickal Temple

According to legend, the King of Pandalam found a baby lying in the banks of river pampa. As the King had no heir to succeed, the child was considered as a god-given gift and was thus named Iyappa. So the baby was brought up as a prince. One of the major events associated with the Makaravilakku festival is the procession of the Thiruvabharanam (holy ornaments) of Lord Iyappa from the Sastha temple at Pandalam.

The nearest town and railway station is Chengannur (12 km).

Other famous Sastha temples related are Kulathupuzha, Achan Koil, and Aryankavu Sastha temple.