

# Stand up, push off, chill out

On holiday on the Malabar coast, a family of water-lovers find their paddleboards ideal for exploring breakers as well as backwaters

Photography by Pierre Bouras

UNHURRIED. UNCOMPLICATED. UNINTIMIDATING. The beauty of travelling with a stand-up paddleboard (SUP) is the way it connects you intimately with the water, and with those that share the water with you. For Carine Camboulives, Manu Bouvet and their two daughters, holidaying in Kerala, on India's western coast, the boards took them everywhere they wanted to go: to bankside villages and markets, across

harbours, into the ocean swells. There they connected with foodsellers and temple-goers, plantation workers and fishermen. While the *kettuvalam*, their houseboat home, was never far away, their individual watercraft allowed for discovery on a micro scale and at a moment's notice. By journey's end, they had become convinced that they had found the ideal vehicle for exploration of this water-borne region of India.

MOBILE HOME  
On the backwaters, home is  
always just a few strokes away.







**FLEXIBLE FRIEND**  
The paddleboards allowed for spontaneous decisions and waterside encounters with locals.



**UNITED COLOURS OF KERALA**  
Lou poses with new friends for a backwater Benetton ad.



**STIRRING STUFF**  
Manu Bouvet whisking up some wave-top action off the outer islands of the Malabar coast.



HEAVEN'S EDGE  
Manu sets a rail into a building  
ramp of Indian Ocean crystal.



CHILD'S PLAY  
Lou takes her chance to slide  
down onto the front of a  
'head-high' wave.

ENDLESS CURLS  
A moment to purge the mind  
and gorge the soul. Manu goes  
down the line on an otherwise-  
empty point break.







**IMITATING NATURE?**  
Carine tracks a turtle patiently paddling the shallows of the lagoon.

**SEA OF TRANQUILITY**  
The old city of Fort Kochi has bustling with traffic for centuries but sunset stills the scene for a glimmering moment.



**SHARING THE LAST OF THE DAY**  
Carine, Manu, Lou and baby Shadé waiting for a ferry across the harbour.



#### PRACTICALITIES

##### **When to go**

Dry and cooler weather (still very warm!) runs from December to April, making this the high season for tourists. If it is surf you want, delay your visit a little as May marks the beginning of the monsoon that brings good swells to the Kerala coast.

##### **How to get there**

Qatar airways has daily flights to Kochi (formerly Cochin) from most major Asian and European cities. Domestic carriers also connect it with the obvious Indian hubs.

##### **What to take**

For your own SUP trip to the backwaters, you can ask your local operator if they have SUP boards; or else consider taking an inflatable SUP with you to give you maximum flexibility.

##### **Contacts**

More general information on the area is available at [www.thegreat-backwaters.com](http://www.thegreat-backwaters.com) and [www.keralatourism.org](http://www.keralatourism.org)

For more on backwater cruises, see [www.rainbowcruises.in](http://www.rainbowcruises.in)