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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 30, 2026

Pandaw Invests in Kerala with New Ship and Flexible River Cruises

Saigon, Vietnam – After a successful debut that saw inaugural departures sell out shortly after launch, Pandaw Cruises is expanding its Kerala Backwaters programme with a second vessel and a new collection of three and four-night itineraries, giving travellers more ways to experience southern India by river.

The expansion responds to growing demand for immersive river journeys beyond India's traditional touring routes while making it easier for travellers to incorporate Kerala into a wider itinerary.

More Ways to Explore Kerala

The new three and four-night Kerala Backwaters expeditions offer greater flexibility for travellers looking to combine a river cruise with destinations such as Rajasthan, Delhi, Mumbai, Darjeeling, or Assam. The shorter sailings follow the recent introduction of similar itineraries on the Hooghly Ganges River in Bengal and form part of Pandaw's broader strategy to offer more flexible river journeys across India.

While Kerala is often associated with houseboats and beach resorts, Pandaw's expeditions explore a quieter side of the state through the interconnected lakes, canals, and waterways that have shaped life along the Malabar Coast for centuries. Once used to transport spices, coir, and merchants between inland villages and the historic port of Kochi, these waterways now provide a unique window into Kerala's culture and heritage. On Pandaw's river cruises, guests explore the colonial streets of Fort Kochi, visit centuries-old churches and temples, experience traditional Kathakali performances, and spend time in waterside communities where daily life continues much as it has for generations.

“When we launched Kerala, we always believed the backwaters had the potential to become one of the standout experiences in our portfolio,” said Paul Strachan, CEO & Founder at Pandaw. “The response from guests has reinforced that belief, giving us the confidence to expand with a second vessel and new itinerary options. It's an exciting next step as we continue growing our presence across India's waterways while staying true to the small-ship experiences that have defined Pandaw for the past 30+ years.”

A New Vessel for 2027

Supporting that expansion, Pandaw has celebrated the traditional launching ceremony of RV Kerala Pandaw, with the vessel's hull entering the water for the first time ahead of its inaugural season in 2027. Purpose-built for Kerala's narrow waterways, once complete, the 10-cabin expedition ship will offer spacious open decks, locally inspired cuisine, and expert-led excursions designed to immerse guests in the region's culture. The vessel will complement RV Kochi Pandaw, allowing Pandaw to significantly expand capacity while maintaining the intimate, small-ship experience for which the company is known.

The new three and four-night Kerala Backwaters expeditions are available to book now aboard RV Kochi Pandaw, with RV Kerala Pandaw joining the programme when she enters service in 2027. The expansion marks another step in Pandaw's continued investment in India, where the company now offers one of the country's most extensive collections of boutique river expeditions sailing the upper and lower Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Kerala Backwaters.

For more information, visit www.pandaw.com/expeditions/kerala-backwaters-short-cruise.

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About Pandaw Cruises:

Founded in 1995, Pandaw Cruises is renowned for its unique, innovative and immersive river cruise experiences across Asia. With a fleet of 15 beautifully crafted ships, designed with a distinctive colonial charm, Pandaw Cruises provides travellers with intimate access to the heart of Asian culture, heritage and natural beauty.