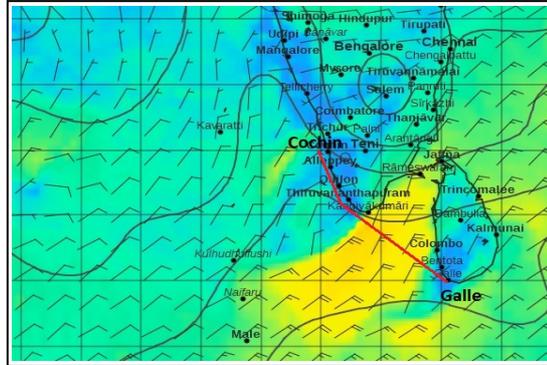
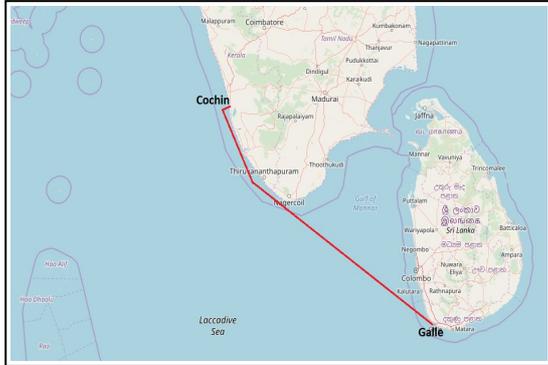




2. India 2020



by Johan Kjellander 2020



We left Sri-Lanka on the 8:th of January 2020. Anchored outside Cochin in India on the 10:th and cleared in with the authorities the next day. From Sri-Lanka to India during the North-East monsoon you have very little wind to begin with. We motorsailed for 8 hours. Then you enter the funneling monsoon between Sri-Lanka and India with winds constantly over 20 knots and rough sea against you. We sailed with two reefs in the main and only half the jib and seasick crew for 20-30 hours. Not fun, but the speed was good, 7-8 knots in average and we like that.



It does happen, from time to time, that you get an extra passenger. A tired bird that lands on your boat for a rest. Maybe it lost its way and went too far out to sea or maybe it was blown out by hard weather. On our way to India a black crow came aboard and sat with us in the cockpit.



We arrived to Cochin as the sun went down and decided to anchor outside the harbour and wait for daylight before we proceeded. As the sun came up the next morning we were soon surrounded by fishing boats.



The smallest fishing boats were very old fashion. Some without engine and some with a simple "long tail" arrangement.



The entrance to Cochin is well known for its "Chinese fishing nets". Very big nets that can be lowered and raised by hand operated winches. See: [Wikipedia about Chinese fishing nets.](#)



The marina in Cochin lies on Bolgatty island, well protected but very shallow. Many yachts stood deep in the mud at low water. There was quite a lot of traffic. Small fishing boats, tourist boats with loud disco music and also a type of big house boats that I have never seen before.



In the marina, we met Wade and Diane on S/Y Joana. Wade has been moderating the FB group "Read Sea Passage" since I became a member and done a big job to assemble important information about this route. Many thanks Wade! Joana is a Bruce Roberts 53 that Wade built himself about 20 years ago.

We also met Nazar who turned out to be a very important person. He helped us to check in, to get diesel, fuel filters, battery and many other things that would have been difficult to find without him.



He was also a very nice person. One day he invited us to his home for lunch. To get there we had to take a ferry and that was an interesting experience in

itself. Never seen anything more crowded.



Nazar lives in a small apartment with only two rooms for his big family. We met his wife and one of his sons with his wife and children. They were all muslims but very open minded to other religions.



Kingfisher is the name of the most popular Indian beer. Not very strange, because the bird who let its name to the beer is very common here. Very nice little bird with wonderful colours.



We also saw Sandpipers, (snäppa), skarv (lien?) and swallow?



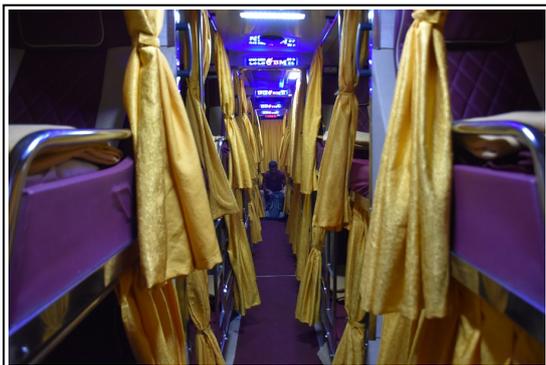
And lots of goats. The small ones are cute. No one like the other.



And everywhere cows. Mostly in the fields where they should be but often running loose and grazing on the roadside. Some had their horns painted. I heard that this is done once a year for a ceremony.



We wanted to see some of India so we decided to take a trip across the south of the continent to Pondy and visit Krister, a friend from home who spends his winters in Auroville, a few kilometers north of Pondy.



I found a sleeper-coach to Pondy that left Cochin at 20.00 in the evening and arrived to Pondy the next morning. No ordinary seats, only beds. First time I tried this concept. Very practical to travel while sleeping.



Auroville. Never been to a place like that. A social experiment backed up by the Indian government and the UN. The village has some 3.000 inhabitants, mostly people originally from western countries. No tax, no money, you do what you can to contribute. A dream village created by the late guru Sri Aurobindo and his successor the "Mother". A modern hippie village or just New Age ? Judge for yourself: [Wikipedia about Auroville](#).

The city is built around a fantastic gold plated monument, the Mitramandir and here we found our friend from home. Krister works here as an artist during the cold Scandinavian winter months.



Krister showed us around and taught us about Auroville. It seems that the original dream of a village where everyone was equal is still just a dream. More than 5.000 poor indian citizens live around Auroville and work at low salaries for the "real" Auroville citizens. Cooking, cleaning, gardening, driving taxi etc. To me it seems like the typical class society you would find anywhere in the world.

One of Krister's friends invited us to his home for lunch. He had been in Scandinavia several times to work and save money so he could build himself a house. We had a nice lunch and inspected his building site.



A piece of ground, 5 by 7 meters was prepared and stone pillars erected as plinths along the sides and inside. Long relatively thin pine members were then placed on the pillars to form the base for the upper floor and the roof. Everything was tied together with ropes made of coconut fibres. The roof finally was covered by dried coconut leaves. All very simple.



You see many strange trees in this part of the world. The left picture above shows how a tree has climbed up on the trunk of a coconut palm and then formed a trunk of its own giving the coconut palm a big hug. The crown of this strange appearance is half coconut and half something else.

The right picture shows a tree that has spread out over a large area (more than 50 meters) by sending down air roots to support its branches.



This is a typical tea plantation. We saw many as we travelled through the mountains south west of Pondyerry on our way back to Cochin. Tea

bushes on the ground, protected by silver oak trees with pepper climbing up their trunks.



I always wondered how peanuts grow. Now I know. Krister showed me in his garden. A small plant and the peanuts grow on the roots under ground.



We also tried the juice of sugarcane for the first time. Very pleasant. Not at all as sweet as you might think. The machine on the picture is used to squeeze the juice out of the canes. The same juice that can be fermented and distilled to produce rom.



We made two stops on our way home. The first was in Kumily close to Periyar lake and Tiger Reserve, which is said to house some 40 tigers still living in the free. We took a 3 hour jeep safari and saw no tigers but I managed to get a wild Indian Buffalo with my 300 millimeter objective. Not my best picture but maybe the most exiting. Just a few days earlier a buffalo

had been killed by a tiger close to the spot where I took this picture. The remains of the buffalo had been observed by a guide the day before.

777 km²



Very hard to spot but you see the head of one buffalo inside the red ring and the body of another buffalo in the lower right corner. They are big animals, over a ton in weight.



Our second stop on the way back to Cochin was Allapetty. Also described as the Venice of India. Lots of natural inland waterways and also many man made canals. We took a 2 hour boat ride and immediately recognized the nice feeling of canal life from our many trips on the Canals of Europe.

On such waters boat types have been developed that would never make it in the open sea. How about the canoe above ? 64 paddlers, extremely long and narrow and a high stern but low bow. See: [Wikipedia about Snake Boats](#).



We only saw models of Snake Boats but plenty of other old boat types are still used in the canals. Teak planks are sewn together with coconut fibres to form the hull. Similar technique as used almost 5.000 years ago by the Egyptians.



Powering is also very primitive. Longtail drive using engines that seem to be 100 years old.



All canals have men fishing and woman washing. Same in India.



The last photo from India will be this interesting image. Through the branches of the tree you see the planet Venus and above the tree, the growing moon. A sight you would normally see looking west on the Indian Ocean, just after sundown.



End of India 2020

