

Rihla Book 7

From Delhi to the Malabar Coast 1342



As ambassador of Sultan Tughluq to the Emperor of China
Battuta sets out towards the Malabar Coast.

Use the [Battuta Google-Earth map](#) for the details of his route. (You need to have [Google-Earth](#) on your hard-disc to open the GE-kmz file!).

Rihla 7 ,1342

Kul-Koel, Aligarh

Battuta's Impressive Armed Caravan Marches South

The emperor of China had sent valuable gifts to the sultan, with a request that the sultan would permit him to rebuild an idol [Buddhist] temple near the mountains called Qiarajil [Himalaya], which the Moslem army had sacked and destroyed.

The Sultan decided to requiete the emperor's present with an even richer one—a hundred thoroughbred horses, a hundred white slaves, a hundred Hindu dancing- and singing-girls, twelve hundred pieces of various kinds of cloth, gold and silver candelabra and basins, brocade robes, caps, quivers, swords, gloves embroidered

with pearls, and fifteen eunuchs.

As my fellow-ambassadors the sultan appointed the amir Zahir of Zanzan, one of the most eminent men of learning, and the eunuch Kafur, the cup-bearer, into whose keeping the presents were entrusted. He also sent the amir Muhammad of Herat with a thousand horsemen to escort us to the port of embarkation. We were accompanied by the fifteen Chinese ambassadors, along with their servants, about a hundred men in all.

We, therefore, set out as an imposing force and formed a large camp. [22nd July 1342]

Near the town of Kul [Koel, Aligarh] they were attacked by a sizable infidel army. Battuta gets separated from his caravan and errs around for over a week pursued by the infidels. He narrowly escapes with the help of an Arabic speaker by the name of "Joyous Heart", who carries the unconscious Battutah to safety.

When I regained consciousness I thought of the man who had carried me on his shoulders [who had vanished] and remembered what the saint Abu 'Abdallah al-Murshidi had told me in Alexandria: "You will enter the land of India and meet there my brother Dilshad, who will deliver you from a misfortune which will befall you there." - "Joyous Heart" translated into Persian, is Dilshad....

They march on through Kanauji, Gwalior - where he relates another magical story - Chandiri, Ujjayn, Dhihar to the port of Quandahar/Gandhar, from where they embark for Calicut on the Malabar Coast.

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Gwalior



Gwalior Fort

Photo jorgetutor.com

We journeyed thereafter to Galyur or Guyalyur [Gwalior], a large town with an impregnable fortress isolated on the summit of a lofty hill. Over its gate is an elephant with its mahout carved in stone.

The governor of this town was the Abyssinian Badr, a slave of the sultan's, a man

whose bravery passed into a proverb. He was continually making raids on the infidels alone and single handed, killing and taking captive, so that his fame spread far and wide and the infidels went in fear of him. He was tall and corpulent, and used to eat a whole sheep at a meal. A man of upright character, who treated me very honourably.

One day I came before him as he was about to have an infidel cut in two. I said to him "By God I beseech you, do not do this, for I have never seen anyone being put to death in my presence." He ordered the man to be put in prison so my intervention was the means of his escape.

During a raid on a village belonging to some Hindus Badr's horse fell with him into a matamore and the villagers surrounded him and killed him.

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Chandiri

Thence we journeyed through Chandiri to the town of Dhihar [Dhar], which is the chief city of Malwa, the largest province in that district. It is twenty-four days' journey from Delhi, and all along the road between them there are pillars, on which is engraved the number of miles from each pillar to the next. When the traveller desires to know now many miles he has gone that day and how far it is to his halting place or to the town he is making for, he reads the inscription on the pillars

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Ujjayn



An Indian yogi daubing himself with ashes and tikka powder (Pashupatinath)
Photo RWFG

Battuta on Yogis

The sultan sent for me once when I was at Delhi, and on entering I found him in a private apartment with some of his intimates and two jugis. One of them squatted

on the ground, then rose into the air above our heads, still sitting.

I was so astonished and frightened that I fell to the floor in a faint. A potion was administered to me, and I revived and sat up. Meantime this man remained in his sitting posture. His companion then took a sandal from a bag he had with him, and beat it on the ground like one infuriated. The sandal rose in the air until it came above the neck of the sitting man and then began hitting him on the neck while he descended little by little until he sat down alongside us.

Then the sultan said " If I did not fear for your reason I would have ordered them to do still stranger things than what you have seen." I took my leave, but was affected with palpitation and fell ill, until he ordered me to be given a draught which removed it all.

The men of this class do some marvellous things. One of them will spend months without eating or drinking, and many of them have holes dug for them in the earth which are then built in on top of them, leaving only a space for air to enter. They lay in these for months, and I heard tell of one of them who remained thus for a year.

They can tell what is happening at a distance. The sultan holds them in esteem and admits them to his company. Some eat nothing but vegetables, and others, the majority, eat no meat; it is obvious that they have so disciplined themselves in ascetic practices that they have no need of any of the goods or vanities of this world. There are amongst them some who merely look at a man and he falls dead on the spot.

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Quandahar-Gandhar



A large ancient Indian vessel (17th cent?)

Photo Ancient ships, Indianetzone.com

Qandahar is a large town belonging to the infidels and situated on a tidal basin.

The ships there lie on the mud at ebb-tide and float on the water at high tide. The sultan of Qandahar is an infidel called Raja Jalansi, who is under Muslim suzerainty and sends a gift to the king of India every year.

He came out to welcome us and showed us the greatest honour, himself leaving his palace and installing us in it. The principal Muslims at his court came to visit us. One of these is the shipowner Ibrahim al-Jagir, who possesses six vessels of his own.

We embarked on one of his ships. On this ship we put seventy of the horses of Sultan Tughluq's presents [to the Chinese Emperor], and the rest we put with the horses of our companions on a ship belonging to Ibrahim's brother.

Raja Jalansi gave us another vessel on which we put the horses of Zahir ad-Din and Sunbul and the Chinese ambassador's party, and he equipped it for us with water, provisions and forage. He sent his son with us on a ship which resembled a galley, but is rather broader; it has sixty oars and is covered with a roof during battle in order to protect the rowers from arrows and stones.

I myself went on board al-Jagir's ship, which had a complement of fifty rowers and fifty Abyssinian men-at-arms. These latter are the guarantors of safety on the Indian Ocean; let there be but one of them on a ship and it will be avoided by the Indian pirates and idolaters.

Rihla 7, 1342

Sandabur-Goa



Battutas boat in Sandabur
Photo [jacniew, Panoramio](#)

On the island of Sandabur [Goa] are thirty-six villages. It is surrounded by a gulf, the waters of which are sweet and agreeable at low tide but salt and bitter at high tide.

In the centre of the island are two cities, an ancient one built by the infidels, and one built by the Muslims when they first captured the island. We passed by this

island and anchored at a smaller one near the main-land. Next day we reached the town of Hinawr.

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Honavar 1342



The coast near Honavar at the height of the monsun

Photo [Prasan Naik, flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/prasan_naik/)

"Hinawr [Honavar] is on a large inlet navigable for large ships. During the pushkal, which is the rainy season, this bay is so stormy that for four months it is impossible to sail on it except for fishing.

The women of this town and all the coastal districts wear nothing but loose unsewn garments, one end of which they gird round their waist and drape the rest over their head and shoulders. They are beautiful and virtuous, and each wears a gold ring in her nose.

One peculiarity amongst them is that they all know the Koran by heart. I saw in the town thirteen schools for girls and twenty-three for boys, a thing which I have never seen elsewhere. Its inhabitants live by maritime commerce, and have no cultivated land."

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Fakanur Barkur 1342



Boats in the inlet at Fanakur-Barkur
Photo [Charles & Josette Lenars/CORBIS](#)

"Fakanur [Barkur], is a large town on an inlet; here there is a large quantity of sugar-canes, which are unexcelled in the rest of that country.

The chief of the Muslim community at Fakanur is called Basadaw. He possesses about thirty warships, commanded by a Muslim called Lula, who is an evildoer and a pirate and a robber of merchants. When we anchored, the sultan sent his son to us to stay on board the ship as a hostage. We went on shore to visit him and he treated us with the utmost civility for three nights, as a mark of respect for the sultan of India and also from a desire to make some profit by trading with the personnel of our vessels.

It is a custom of theirs that every ship that passes by the town must needs anchor at it and give a present to the ruler. This they call the "right of bandar" If anyone omits to do this, they sail out in pursuit of him, bring him into the port by force, double the tax on him, and prevent him from proceeding on his journey for as long as they wish.

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Mangalore Malabar Coast



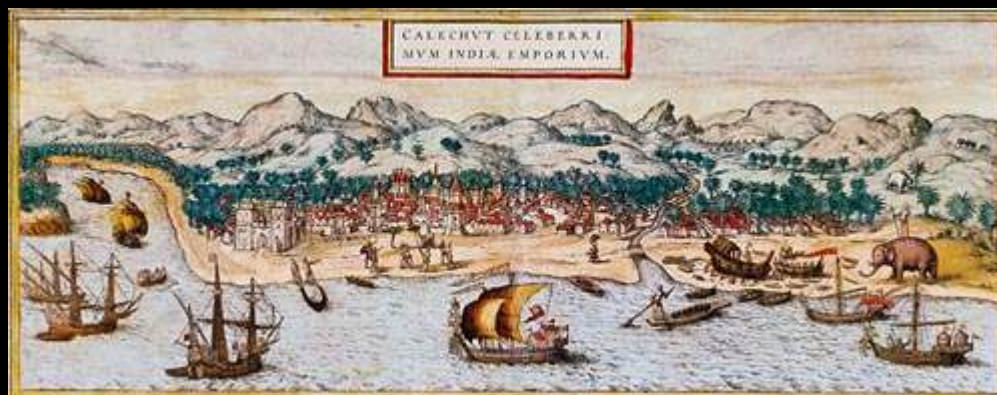
Malabar fishing boats
Photo worldisround.com

Three days after leaving Fakanur we reached Manjarur [Mangalore], a large town on the inlet called ad-Dumb, which is the largest inlet in the land of Mulaybar. This is the town at which most of the merchants from Fars and Yemen disembark, and pepper and ginger are exceedingly abundant there.

There is a colony of about four thousand Muslims there, living in a suburb alongside the town. Conflicts frequently break out between them and the townspeople, but the sultan makes peace between them

Rihla 7, 1342

Calicut 1342



Calicut 1572
Photo Aramcoworld

Qaliquit [Calicut] is one of the chief ports in Mulaybar and one of the largest harbours in the world. It is visited by vessels from China, Sumatra, Ceylon, the

Maldives, Yemen and Fars, and in it gather merchants from all quarters.

When we reached the city, the principal inhabitants and merchants and the sultan's representative came out to welcome us, with drums, trumpets, bugles and standards on their ships. We entered the harbour in great pomp, the like of which I have never seen in those lands, but it was bound to be a joy to be followed by distress.

We stopped in the port of Calicut, in which there were at the time thirteen Chinese vessels, and disembarked. Every one of us was lodged in a house and we stayed there three months as the guests of the infidel Sultan, awaiting the season of the voyage to China.

On the Sea of China travelling is done in Chinese ships only, so we shall describe their arrangements:

The Chinese vessels are of three kinds; large ships called junks, middle-sized ones called zavos [dhows], and small ones called kakams. The large ships have anything from twelve down to three sails, which are made of bamboo rods plaited like mats. They are never lowered, but turned according to the direction of the wind; at anchor they are left floating in the wind.

A ship carries a complement of a thousand(?) men, six hundred of whom are sailors and four hundred men-at-arms, including archers, men with shields and arbalists, who throw naphtha. Each large vessel is accompanied by three smaller ones, the "half," the "third," and the "quarter."

These vessels are built only in the towns of Zaytun (Qiamen) and Sin-Kalan [Canton]. The vessel has four decks and contains rooms, cabins, and saloons for merchants; a cabin has chambers and a lavatory, and can be locked by its occupant, who takes along with him slave girls and wives. Often a man will live in his cabin unknown to any of the others on board. The sailors have their children living on board ship, and they cultivate green stuffs, vegetables and ginger in wooden tanks. The owner's factor on board ship is like a great amir.



Calicut 1342

Photo thegirlfrom the ghetto.wordpress.com

Disaster Strikes

When the time came for the voyage to China, the Sultan equipped for us one of the thirteen junks in the port of Calicut. The factor on the junk was called Sulayman al-Safad from Syria.

I had previously made his acquaintance, and I said to him, "I want a cabin to myself because of the slave-girls, for it is my habit never to travel without them." He replied, "The merchants from China have taken the cabins for the forward and return journey. My son-in-law has a cabin which I can give you, but it has no lavatory; perhaps you may be able to exchange it for another." So I told my companions to take on board all my effects, and the male and female slaves embarked on the junk.

This was on a Thursday, and I stayed on shore in order to attend the Friday prayers and join them afterwards. King Sunbul and Zahir ad-Din also went on board of the junk with the presents.

My boy came and told me that the cabin we had taken on the junk was small and unsuitable. When I spoke of this to the captain he said "It cannot be helped, but if you like to transfer to the kakam there are cabins on it at your choice." I agreed to this and gave orders accordingly to my companions, who transferred the slave girls and effects to the kakam

Now it is usual for this sea to become stormy every day in the late afternoon. That night the sea struck the junk which carried the sultan's presents, it was driven on shore and broke up. A few people survived. When those on the kakam saw what had happened to the junk they spread their sails and went off, with all my goods, slave-boys and slave-girls on board, leaving me alone on the beach with but one slave whom I had freed. When he saw what had befallen me he deserted me. I had nothing left with me at all except 10 dinars that a yogi had given me, and my prayer carpet.

Next morning we found the bodies of Sunbul and Zahir ad-Din, and having prayed over them buried them. I saw the infidel sultan of Calicut, wearing a large white cloth round his waist and a small turban, bare-footed, with a parasol carried by a slave over his head and a fire lit in front of him on the beach; his police officers were beating the people to prevent them from plundering what the sea had cast up."

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Battuta, alone, sets out on foot and by river boat

"As I was told that the kakam would have to put in at Kawlam (Quilon), and decided to travel there, it being a ten days' journey by land and by river boat. I hired one of the Muslims to carry the carpet for me. On the boats their custom is to disembark in the evening and pass the night in the village on the rivers banks, returning to the boat in the morning. We did this too. There was no Muslim on the boat except the man I had hired, and he used to drink wine with the infidels when we went ashore and annoy me with his brawling, which made things all the worse.

All the trees along this river are cinnamon and brazil trees. They use them for firewood in those parts and we used to light fires with them to cook our food on this journey.

On the tenth day we reached the city of Kawlam [Quilon], one of the finest towns in the Mulaybar lands. It has fine bazaars, and its merchants are called Suits. They are immensely wealthy; a single merchant will buy a vessel with all that is in it and load it with goods from his own house. There is a colony of Muslim merchants; the cathedral mosque is a magnificent building, constructed by the merchant Khwaja Muhazzab.



People, Jews, Moslems, Christians, on the Malabar Road
Photo [Taylor-Schechter, lib.cam.ac.uk](http://Taylor-Schechter.lib.cam.ac.uk)

From Sandabur [Goa] to Kawlam [Quilon] it takes 2 months travel by boat or by land. There is a road over the whole distance which runs beneath the shade of trees, and at every half-mile there is a wooden shed with benches on which all travellers, whether Muslims or infidels, may sit. At each shed there is a well for drinking and an infidel who is in charge of it. If the traveller is an infidel he gives him water in vessels; if he is a Muslim he pours the water into his hands. It is the custom of the infidels (Brahmins) in the Mulaybar lands that no Muslim may enter their houses or eat from their vessels; if he does so they break the vessel or give them to the Muslims. In places where there are no Muslim inhabitants they give him food on banana leaves. At all the halting-places on this road there are houses belonging to Muslims, at which Muslim travellers alight, and where they buy all that they need. Were it not for them no Muslim could travel by it.

No one travels on an animal in that country, and only the sultan possesses horses. The principal vehicle of the inhabitants is a palanquin carried on the shoulders of slaves or hired porters; those who own no palanquins go on foot, be they who they may. Baggage and merchandise is transported by hired carriers, and a single merchant may have a hundred such or thereabouts carrying his goods. I have never seen a safer road than this, for they put to death anyone who steals a single nut.

At the boundary of the territories of each ruler there is a wooden gateway, on which is engraved the name of the ruler whose territories begin at that point. This is called the " Gate of Security " of such-and-such a prince. If any Muslim or infidel

criminal flees from the territories of one and reaches the Gate of Security of another, his life is safe, and the prince from whom he has fled cannot seize him, even though he be a powerful prince with a great army.

The rulers in these lands transmit their sovereignty to their sisters' sons, to the exclusion of their own children. I have seen this practice nowhere else except among the veiled Massufa, who will be mentioned later.

Rihla 7, 1343

Cochin Kunja-Kari



Photo [fsalliau, travel.webshots](http://fsalliau.travel.webshots)

The synagogue in Cochin (17th cent). But there must have been a synagogue here long before Battuta's time: The Cochin Jewish settlement goes back to the 1st cent BC. The Syrian "Thomas Christians" followed in 45 AD, and in 625 AD one of the first mosques was built here.

On the fifth day of our journey we came to Kunja-Kari (Cochin) which is on the top of a hill. It is inhabited by Jews, who have one of their own number as their governor and pay a polltax to the sultan of Kawlām.

Rihla 7, 1343

Kawlan-Kollam (Qilon)



Kerala boat near Kollam
Photo [tashimelampo](#), [Panoramio](#)

On the tenth day we reached the city of Kawlam [Quilon], one of the finest towns in the Mulaybar lands. It has fine bazaars, and its merchants are called Suits. They are immensely wealthy; a single merchant will buy a vessel with all that is in it and load it with goods from his own house. There is a colony of Muslim merchants; the cathedral mosque is a magnificent building, constructed by the merchant Khwaja Muhazzab.

I stayed some time at Kawlam in a hospice, but heard no news of the kakam. During my stay the ambassadors from the ewmperor of China there also. They had survived. The Chinese merchants provided them with clothes, and they returned to China, where I met them again later.

I intended at first to return from Kawlam to Dehli to tell the sultan what had happened to the presents (for the Chinese emperor), but afterwards I was afraid that he would find fault with me and ask me why I had not stayed withhis presents. I determined therefore to return to Hinawar (Honavar) and stay with Sultan Jamal ad-Din until I should obtain news of the kakam.

It was then the end of the season for voyaging, and I set out for Calicut. We used to sail only during the first half of the day, then anchor until the next day (which made that journey twenty days long).

Eventually, on reaching Hinawr, I went to the sultan and saluted him; he assigned me a lodging, but without a servant. I spent most of my time in the mosque and used to read the Koran through every day, and later twice a day.

Rihla 7, 1343

Honavar

After the shipwreck in Calicut, afraid of the Sultan of Dehli's spies, Battuta returned to Honavar to take refuge under the protection of Sultan Jalal ad-Din's.

"The ruler of Hinawr, Sultan Jalal ad-Din is one of the best and most powerful sultans along the Malabar coast."

Jalal ad-Din was about to go on a military expedition to capture Sandabur-Goa from the infidels. After a long deliberation using the Qur'an as an augury Battuta joined him. They captured the city and stayed there several months. Battuta had not given up China, and made several trips between Sandabur, Honavar and Calicut looking for the lost kakam with his riches. Eventually news reached him that the Sultan of Summatra had confiscated the boat and its cargo of "presents" and slave girls.

" ... I stayed for eleven months at Jalal ad-Din's court without ever eating bread, for their sole food is rice. For another three years I ate nothing but rice, until I could not swallow it any more except by taking water with it."



Neychoru (Ghee Rice), a traditional malabar Muslim dish.

You find the recipe for this dish at icookipost.com

In the end the infidels returned to retake Sandabur. During their siege Battuta slipped out, made his way to Calicut - and went to the Maldives to await the eastward monsoon.