

# **PADMANABHAPURAM PALACE ARCHITECTURE**





## Padmanabhapuram Palace Architecture

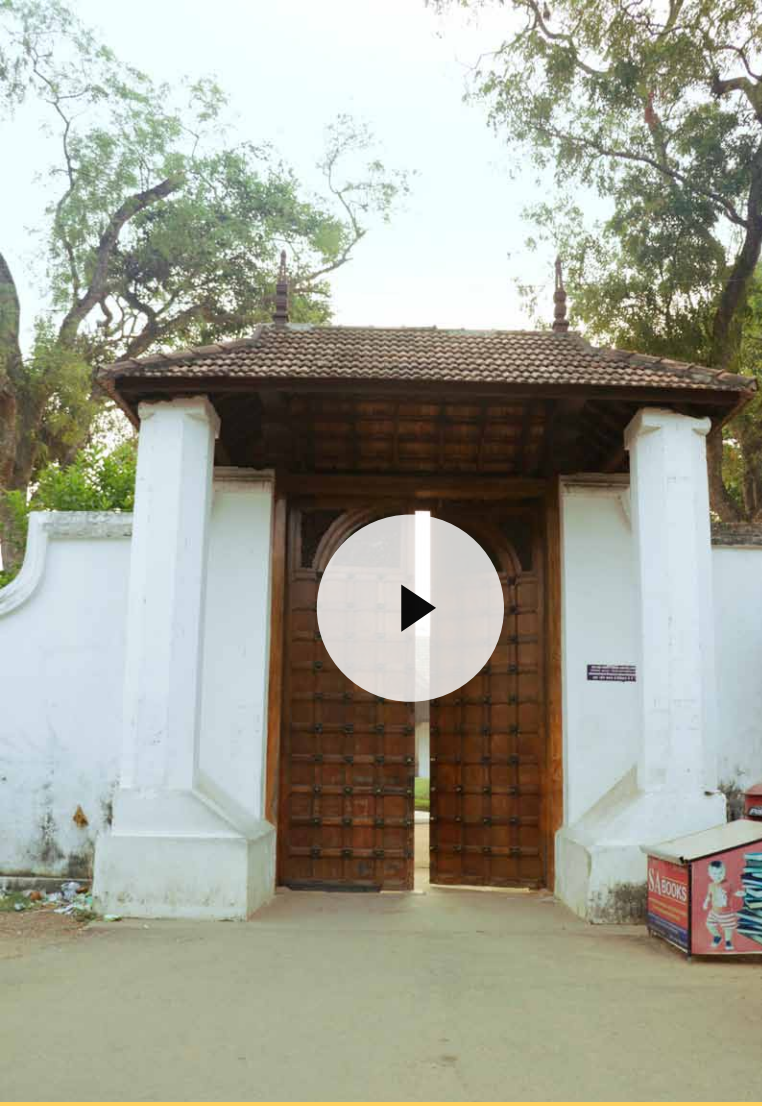
*Padmanabhapuram Palace, a veritable architectural marvel, is a harmonious blend of imposing edifices, intricate woodwork and impeccable craftsmanship. Over 400 years old, it spans an area of 6.5 acres and encompasses more than 15 distinctive structures. Hailed as the largest wooden palace in all of Asia, Padmanabhapuram Palace is a testament to the might of the erstwhile Travancore dynasty as well as the unparalleled skill of the artisans of yore.*



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## Mukhya Vathil and Forecourt

*M*ukhya Vathil or gateway is the main entrance of the palace, through which one can catch a glimpse of the splendours that await inside. Massive doors mounted with metal spikes and the impressively large walls offered protection against enemies. The doorway opens into the forecourt, which used to be the hub of activity in the ancient days, with the king conducting wrestling matches or armed combat for entertainment. An elegant museum block has been seamlessly integrated into the southern part of the forecourt.







## Poomukhamalika

By crossing the elaborate gateway, flanked on both sides by carved stone pillars, is called the *padippura*. It has a *natamalika* or upper storey that connects the various sections of the palace complex. Its crowning glory is an ostentatious overhead bay window through which one gets a panoramic view of the quadrangle, as well as the courtyard ahead of the *poomukhamalika* (entrance hall). Normally used by sentries, it allowed the royal ladies to observe the festivities on special occasions. The *poomukhamalika*, an integral part of traditional Kerala architecture, is a structure connected to the rest of the buildings of the complex. The royals received officials and guests in the elegant foyer of the *poomukhamalika*, with the intricately carved woodwork of the ceiling, mesmerises all who set their gaze upon it.



## Mani Meda

*Mani Meda* or the palace clock tower is situated to the left of the *poomukhamalika*. Legend has it that the clock tower was built by a blacksmith who had travelled all the way to Spain to master the craft of clock-making from priests, although no evidence has been found to support the same. A balcony with ornate filigree woodwork frames the clock, which was heard by people within a radius of 3 km in the days of yore.



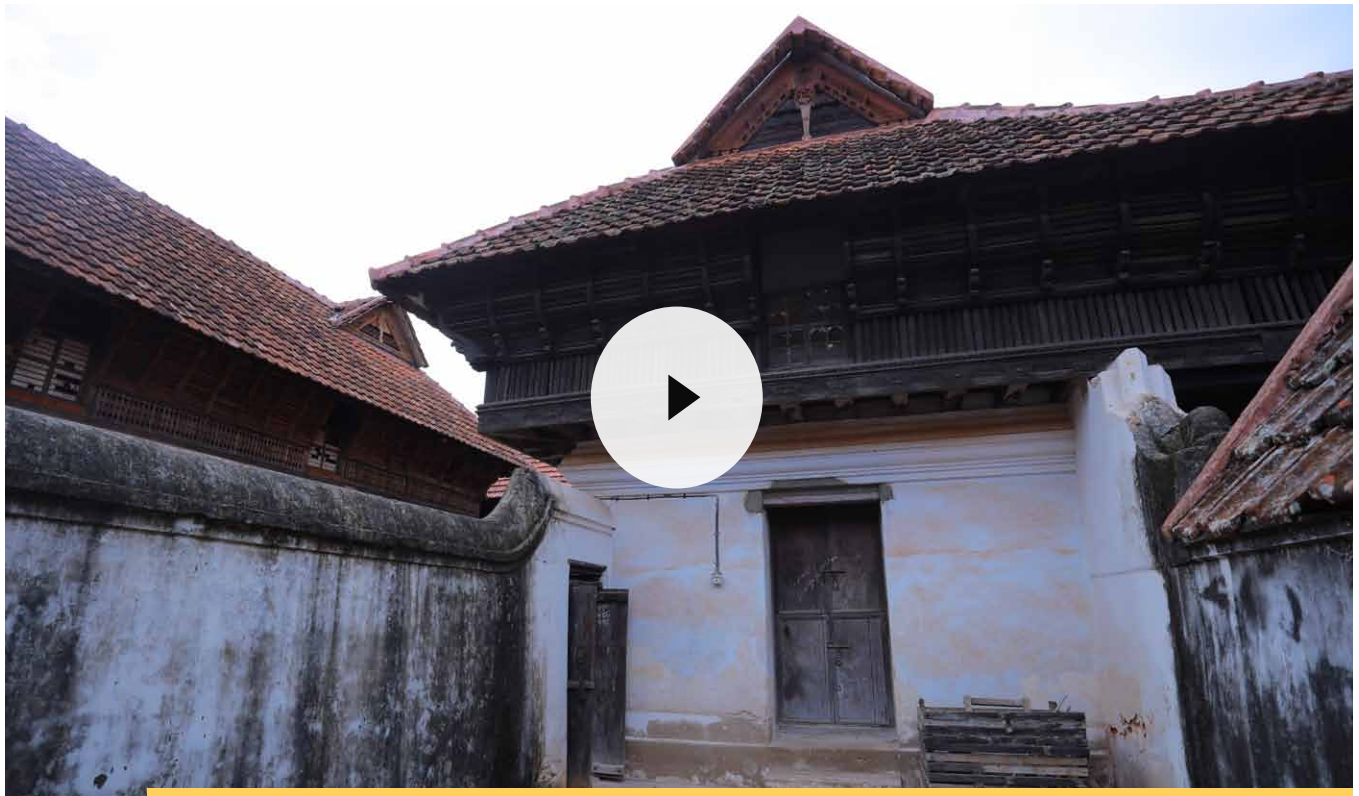




## Thai Kottaram

Constructed in 16th century, *Thai Kottaram* is the heart of the palace complex. The oldest structure within the Padmanabhapuram Palace, *Thai Kottaram* was the main building to which numerous edifices were added by various rulers to form the complex as we see it today. Its inner section opens to a traditional *nalukettu*, a typical feature in Kerala architecture, an open courtyard with rooms spread out on all four sides. Visitors might overlook a trapdoor on the western side of the inner verandah, which used to be an old escape route, linking the *Thai Kottaram* with the erstwhile Charode Palace.



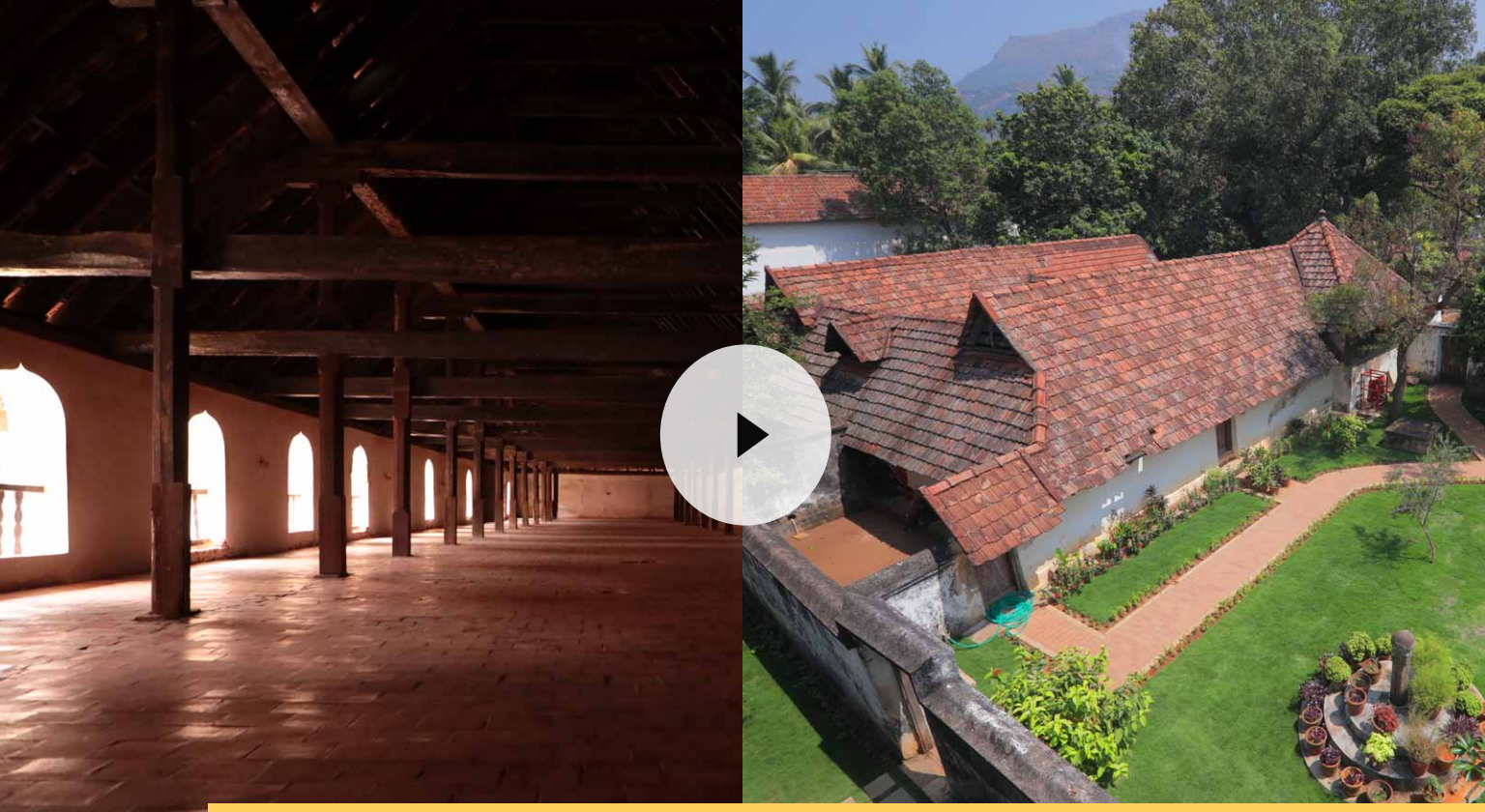


## Plamuttu Kottaram

The Plamuttu Kottaram, another double storied residential structure is located between the Vepinmuttu Kottaram and Thai Kottaram. The main entrance into this building is on the southern side opening into a long room with a stairway located in the south west corner. This stairway leads to a series of interconnected living spaces.





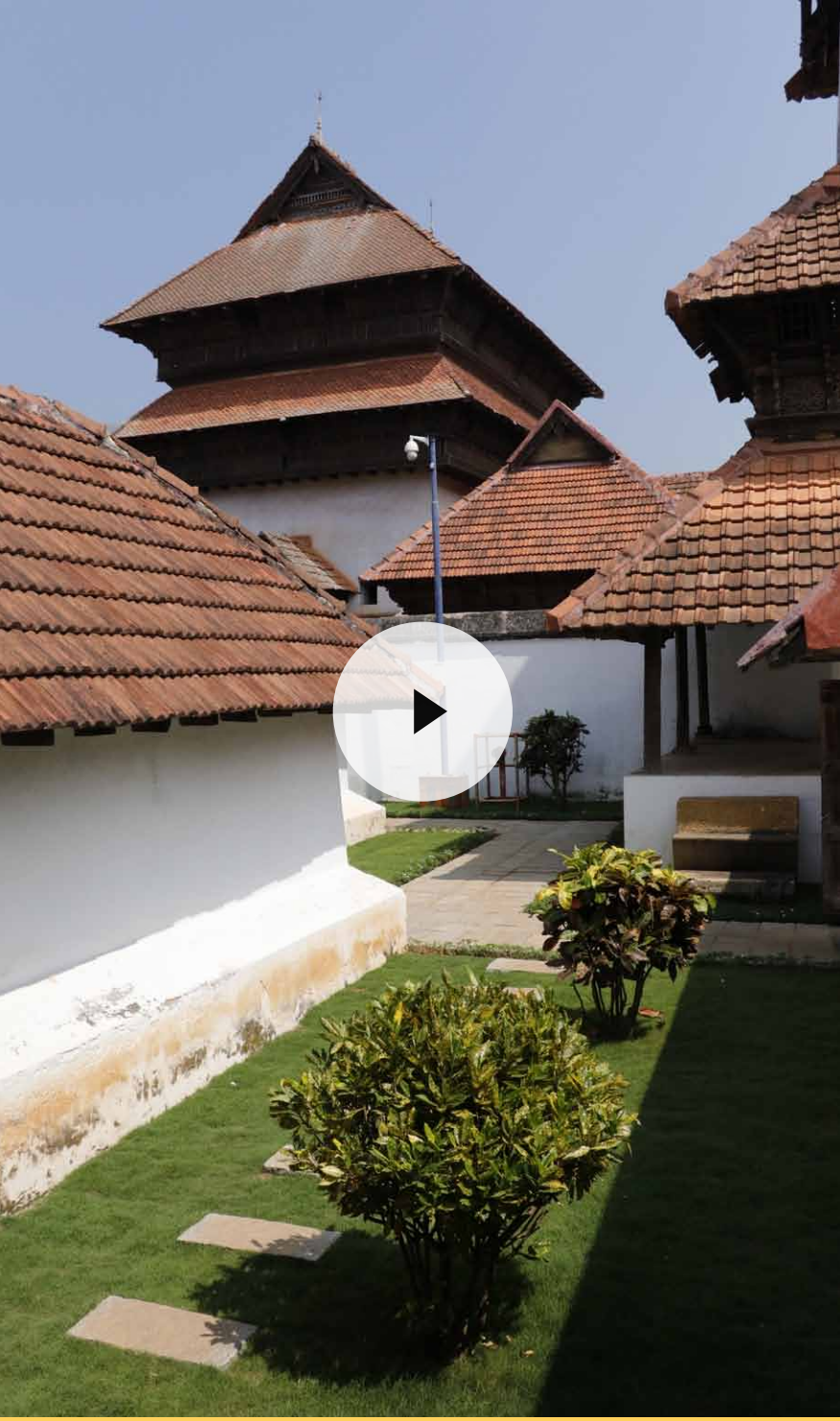


## Valiya Oottupura and Homappura

Valiya Oottupura, the double-storied dining hall, had the capacity to hold a crowd of up to 2000. Substituting ornamentation with efficacy, the shrewd craftsmen constructed an edifice with maximum capacity, which also had the strength to hold the footfall of such a crowd.

*Homappura*, the building used to perform religious offerings to the Gods, is flanked by the *homappurakulam*, a tank which is indispensable for religious ceremonies.

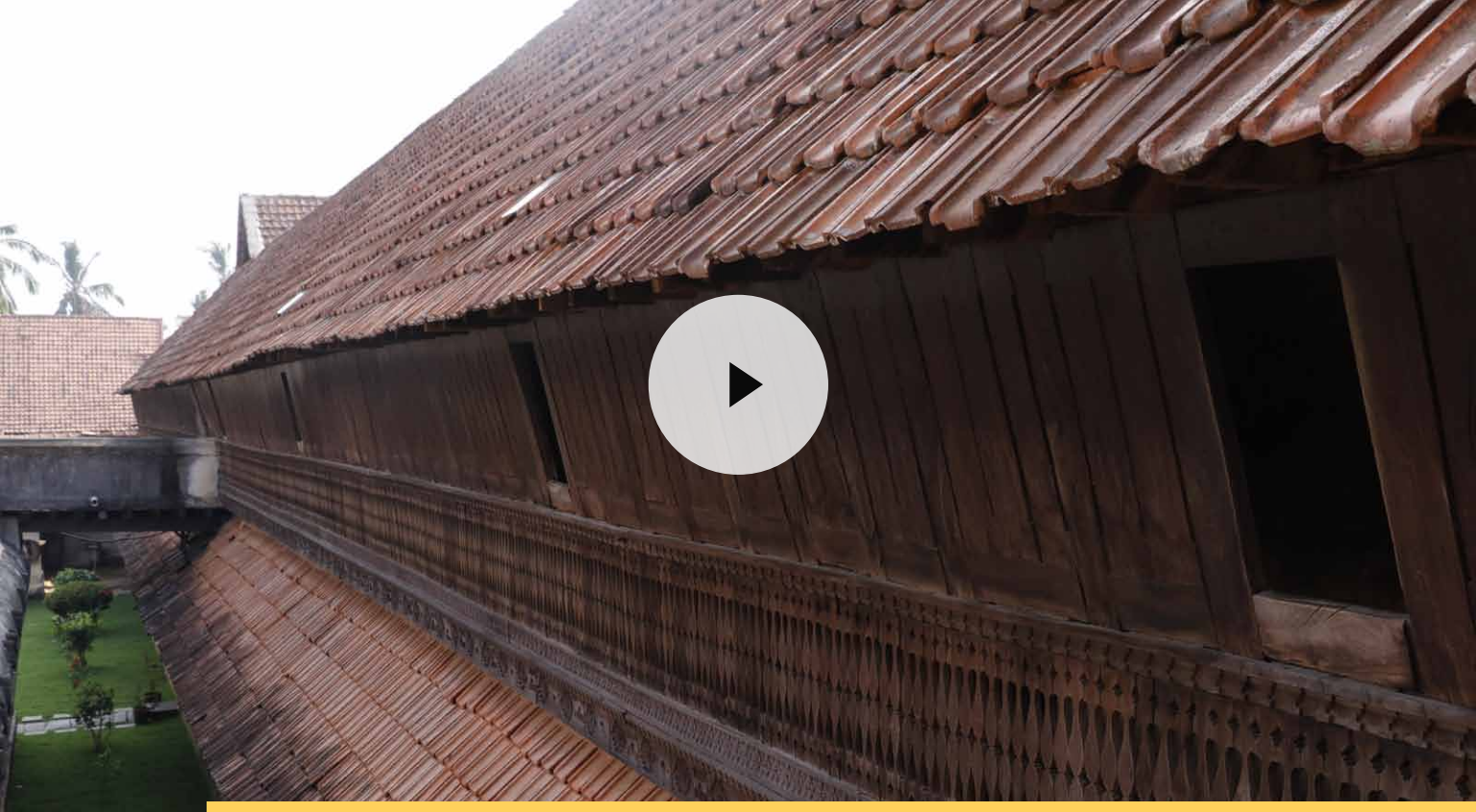




## Uppirikka Malika

A single edifice personifying the harmonious blend of wealth, royal power, duty, and realisation of God, the multi-storied *Uppirikka Malika* has a purpose for each floor. The famed *sapramanchakattil*, (an ornate poster bed) supposedly made from a fusion of 64 timber samples with medicinal properties and mythological carvings, is the major attraction here. The beautiful murals that adorn the walls of the highest floor attract art connoisseurs and researchers from across the globe and are believed to be invaluable.



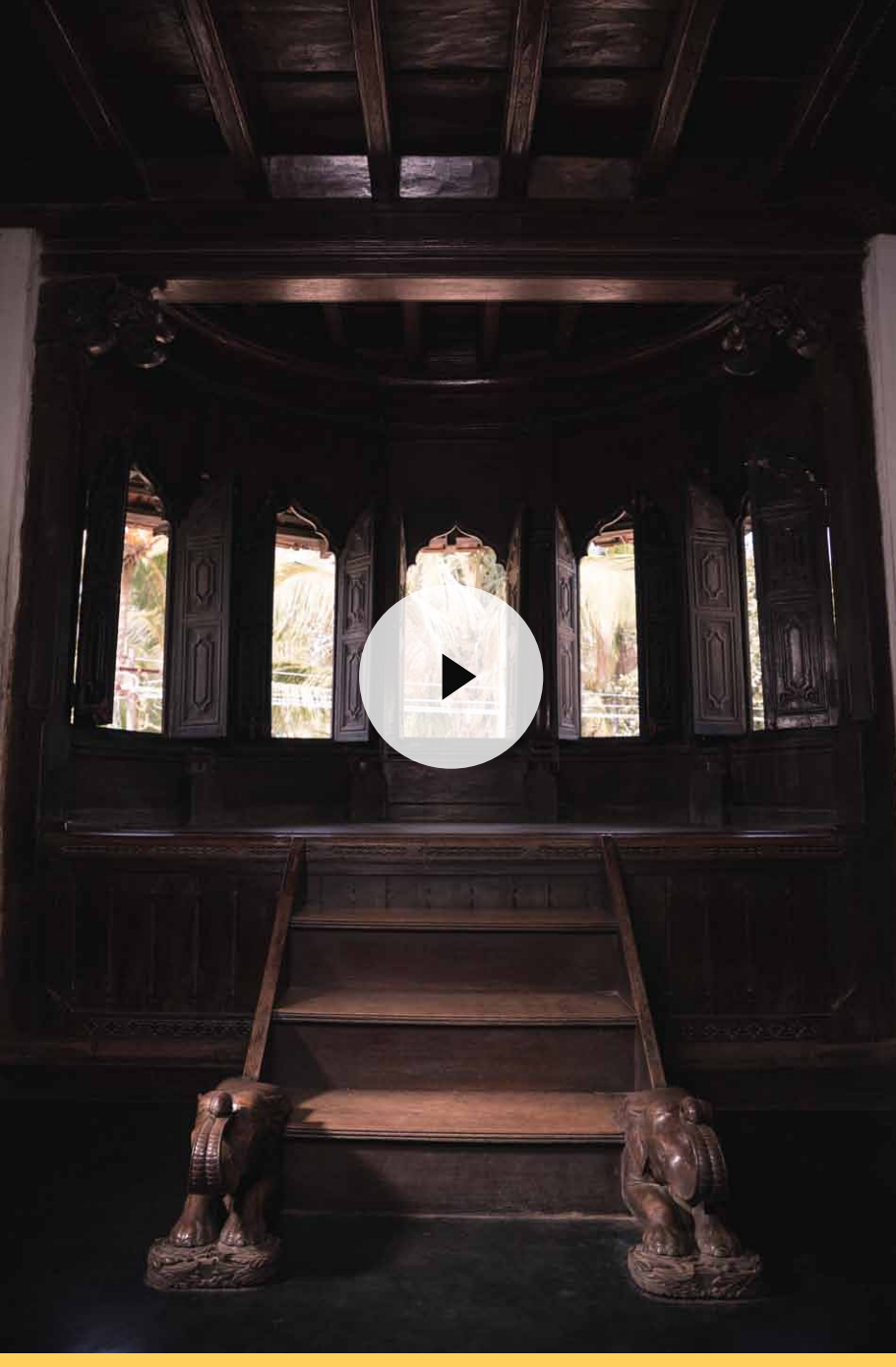


## Ayudhappura

Ayudhappura or the palace armoury is a strictly utilitarian building, devoid of windows and all ornamentations. Records state that, this armoury used to house weapons such as gold-hilted sword with fine blade decorated with ornamental inlays, pistols, guns, and spears.



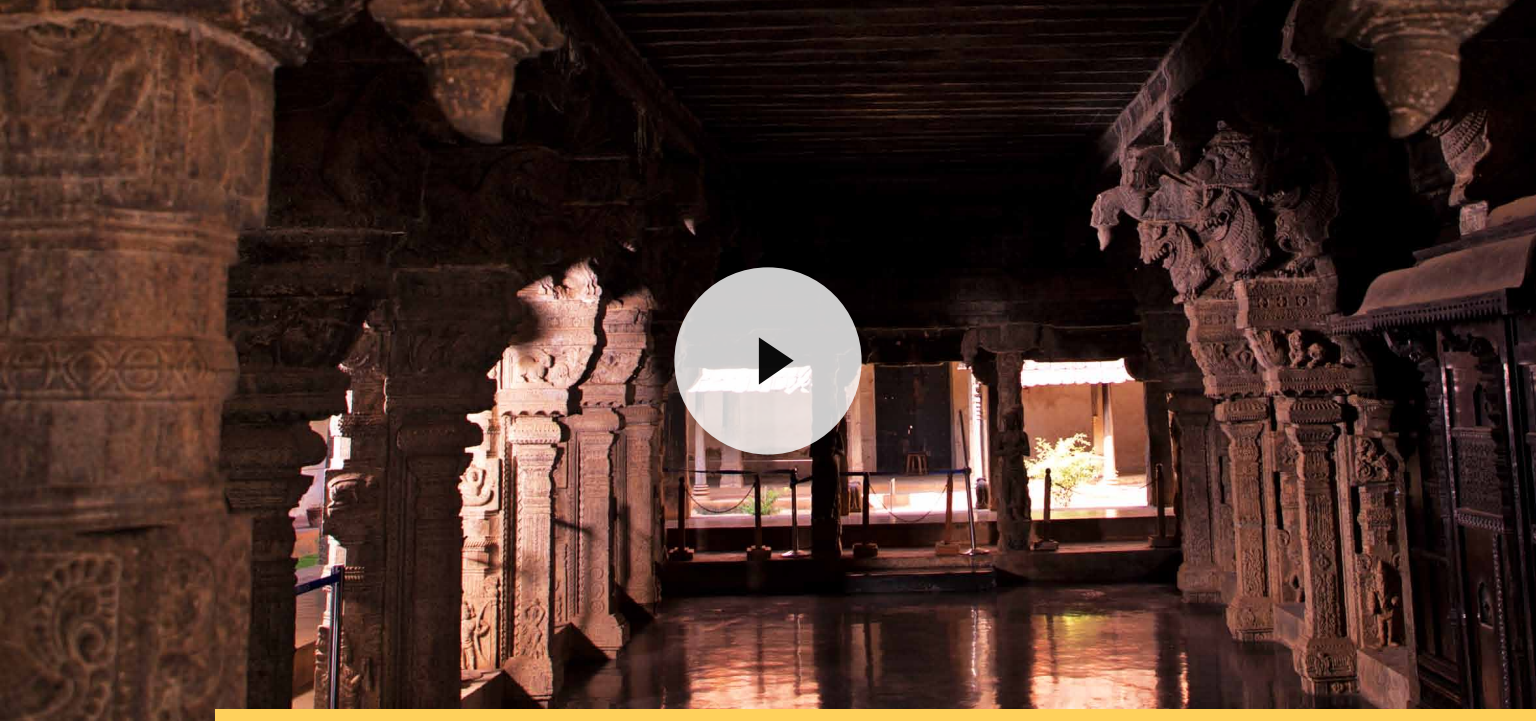




## Ambari Mukhappu

**A**mbari Mukhappu is an ornate bay window that opens to the *Thekke Theruvu* (South Street), a prominent route used mainly religious processions. A charming conical roof, supported by rampant *vyali* (mythical beast) figures is the main attraction of this window.





## Navarathri Mandapam

**N**avarathri Mandapam or the performance hall is an epitome of Dravidian architecture in stone. Defined by ornately carved monolith pillars, in Vijayanagara style with intricate bands of floral and geometric patterns and embellished with dance poses, the hall witnessed many performances by legendary artists of yester years.

