

cats of kochiStory

Published 6 April 2026

Coz Layover Cafe, Mattancherry: iced coffee in a 600-year-old trading street

An iced coffee stop on Bazaar Road in Mattancherry, a street that traded pepper and spices for six hundred years. Coz Layover Cafe now fills a former pepper warehouse.

In this page

What if I told you that the Coz Layover Cafe where you are sipping your iced coffee used to store pepper? Merchants packed hundreds of tons of pepper into godowns with wooden floors designed to fight moisture. Then they shipped the pepper out to buyers in 52 countries. The street outside, Bazaar Road in Mattancherry, was one of the busiest trade corridors in the Indian Ocean for six hundred years.

Now it has your favorite Coz Layover Cafe.

☕ Coz Layover Cafe: History and coffee with a view and vibes (Closed on Mondays. Open Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.)

And you will love the story behind what the space that houses this beautiful cafe used to be.

The Road That Built Kochi

Bazaar Road, where the cafe sits, has been a market since the 14th century. When floods silted up the ancient port at Muziris in 1341, a new opening formed at Fort Kochi. In those days, trade followed the water, and Mattancherry became the natural hub. Nearly 200 warehouses lined this road, each with a front door facing the street and a private jetty at the back opening onto the lake. Spices arrived by boat from the mountains.

Merchants arrived from across the world. People spoke at least fifteen languages on this one road. Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, and Jain communities set up side by side and stayed for generations. Did you know that the world's first pepper exchange started just a few hundred meters from here? People struck deals by a method that sounds made up. Buyer and seller would tie a cloth around their joined hands, then negotiate using finger signals hidden under the fabric. Nobody else could see the price. This system lasted for centuries before fading out just a few decades ago.



From ‘Iced Coffee in a 600-Year-Old Trading Street’ — Coz Layover on Mattancherry’s Bazaar Road.

The Island That Ended It All

In the 1920s, a British harbour engineer named Robert Bristow started dredging a channel for boats through the sandbar blocking Kochi’s backwaters. The mud had to go somewhere. It became an island — Willingdon Island. No one can hold land there. It belongs to the Government, which leases it to businesses on long terms.

For Bazaar Road, this was the end of everything. The big vessels stopped coming to the old Mattancherry waterfront. The warehouses that had buzzed for six centuries fell silent. Trade moved three kilometres away, to an island built from the bottom of the sea.

The Workers Who Fought Back

The port moved. The workers had not. The system they worked under was brutal. Workers called it the chappa system. Every morning before sunrise, an agent called a mooppan came with a stack of metal tokens, the chappas.

Workers, sometimes hundreds of them, crowded around. The mooppan handed a few to his favourites, to the ones who had bought him toddy the night before. Then he threw the rest into the air. If you caught a token, you worked that day. If you did not, you went home hungry.

Men fought each other for one coin.



From 'Iced Coffee in a 600-Year-Old Trading Street' — Coz Layover on Mattancherry's Bazaar Road.

The struggle to end this ran from the 1930s through the 1960s. On Sept. 15, 1953, it turned deadly. Port workers marched through the streets near

Jew Town, demanding the removal of the chappa system. Police opened fire.

Police shot and killed three workers. The Labour Board began in 1967, and the chappa system ended. The Malayalam film “Thuramukham” (2023), directed by Rajeev Ravi, draws on these events. It is worth watching before or after you walk this street.

And Then, a Cafe

Coz Layover Cafe sits in one of these old commercial buildings. A few godowns became galleries. Some warehouses became cafes. The port area became a walk. Shops still exist, and merchants still operate there.

Their iced coffee is very good for a walk along Bazaar Road. People keep mentioning a vegan protein latte. Prices are reasonable, and service is friendly. But people keep coming back for the waterfront view and the calm, a cozy spot on a street that used to be anything but.

If you walk from Fort Kochi towards Jew Town, Coz Layover is a solid stop. Our hidden food spots guide also covers the Mattancherry food walk. Next time you drink your iced coffee there, look at the waterfront. That is where cargo moved for six hundred years. The jetties no longer exist.

The vessels no longer exist. The mooppan with his metal tokens no longer exists. But the building is still here. And now it smells like coffee.

☕ Coz Layover Cafe: History and coffee with a view and vibes (Closed on Mondays. Open Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.)



From ‘Iced Coffee in a 600-Year-Old Trading Street’ — Coz Layover on Mattancherry’s Bazaar Road.

The drink menu at Coz Layover Cafe has a great variety of options for everyone. You can pick a simple, classic coffee or try something fun and new. You can get regular hot coffees and cold brews. Sweet specialty drinks include a Biscoff Latte and their special ‘Coz Magic lattes. If you are not a coffee fan, they have a whole “Matcha Bar” with cool drinks like the Strawberry Matcha Iced Latte.

A “Not Coffee” section offers rich hot and cold chocolates, milkshakes, and fruity mojitos. Plenty of hot and iced teas are available. Unique specials include the Blue Magic Matcha and Blue Berry Chia Pudding. You will find the perfect drink for whatever mood you are in!

And the view!



From ‘Iced Coffee in a 600-Year-Old Trading Street’ — Coz Layover on Mattancherry’s Bazaar Road.

Why the Fishing Boats Are Blue

From the cafe’s waterfront seat, you will notice the fishing boats on the water. They all share the same paint: dark blue hull, orange wheelhouse.

This is not tradition. It is security.

After the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the Government of India rolled out a colour-coding system for all mechanised fishing vessels. Each coastal state got its own combination. Kerala got dark blue and orange. Tamil Nadu got green. Karnataka got blue and white.

If a boat with the wrong colours shows up in Kerala’s waters, the Coast Guard knows immediately it does not belong.

You may also like,

Places in this story 4

MattancherryCoz Layover Cafe

Fort KochiBazaar Road Road