

FERNWEH

Live your travel dreams



AN INITIATIVE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
TRAVEL AND TOURISM



St. Albert's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam
An Initiative of Archdiocese of Verapoly
Affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam



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Preface

Though we live in a digital age, there will always be something quite romantic and meditative about taking a moment to jot down your thoughts while you're on the road. Travel journals are personal. They become time capsules of your memories, emotions, and descriptions of the places, people, and things you've encountered. And even though it will likely be a while before you embark on your next trip, journals are also a great way to plan for future adventures.

Even if you visit a well-known city like Paris or New York City or a small village like Kumbalangi in Kerala, your trip is still unique because of all the little, hidden places you will discover, the conversations you will strike with locals and fellow travelers, and the situations you will find yourself getting into. And since time tends to erase moments, names, and details from our memories, writing them down in a journal is the best way to preserve them for years to come.

And most travelers can't bear to throw away museum tickets or metro cards from foreign cities because they will forever remind you of your time spent there

.
This travel magazine includes some of the memories jotted down about the highlights of the trip the old-school way by few of the students and teachers of The Department of Travel and Tourism of St. Albert's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam, Kerala.

Message



Fr. Dr. Antony Thoppil

Manager and Chairman

St. Albert's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam

It is with great joy that I inform you all that the Department of Travel and Tourism, St. Albert's College(Autonomous), is publishing a travelogue magazine named " Fernweh ", which is the first magazine to be launched by the department since its establishment in 2019.

The magazine includes the articles, artistic works, photo blogs and the travelogues of both students and teachers. I congratulate all the teachers and students, especially the members of the Editorial Team who have taken much pain and effort to publish the same. Our learning and higher education should not be limited to the classrooms; but, it has to be enriched and expanded through creative and innovative activities.

In this regard this venture, I believe, will do a lot. This magazine will remain a source of inspiration for other faculties to produce this type of publications. Once again, I do congratulate the entire team of teachers and students who have collaborated to publish this travelogue.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Antony'.

Fr. Dr. Antony Thoppil

Manager and Chairman

Message



Fr. John Christopher
Registrar
St. Albert's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam

In 2013 I had an experience of travelling to Kathmandu. It was through the Gorakhpur border we had entered Nepal. It was an exciting occasion to enter a foreign land for the first time. Till then, I had travelled only in India. Witnessing a new country travelling in the local vehicles is a different experience. Schedule was planned with the help of friends and contacts in Uttar Pradesh and Kathmandu. Eventhough it was a planned programme the location visits were planned after reaching those places. Hence, something unplanned happened. The places which we visited were mostly connected to Buddha. As Seneca says, "Travel imparts a new vigor to the mind". And for all of us it was a time of enrichment and new vigor.

According to Dalai Lama, you have to go once a year to someplace you have never been. If you do not travel, as St. Augustine says in the world which is a book you would have read only one page. And travelling helps you to know the value of men according to a Moorish Proverb. If you are a traveller you will naturally turn out to be a story teller. It is your travel experiences that make you modest and give you an understanding that how tiny a place you occupy in the world.

I am indeed proud of the Department of Travel and Tourism, St. Albert's College (Autonomous) on their new initiative, the travelogue magazine named "Fernweh". I would like to appreciate both teachers and students who have worked since 2019 contributing with articles, artistic work, photo blogs, and the travelogue. I wish all success to the initiative and pray that this initiative turn out to be a useful magazine for the student flock.

Fr. John Christopher
Registrar

Message



Dr. Solomon M A

Principal

St. Albert's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam

I am very much delighted that the Department of Travel and Tourism is bringing out a Magazine named as 'Fernweh'. It gives me immense pleasure to write a few words in the "Fernweh". I congratulate all the members of the Department for the effort they are taking to bring out this Magazine.

Academic excellence along with co-curricular and extracurricular activities complete the process of education. The students and the faculty of the Department will get a chance to bring out the different aspects of the Travel and Tourism.

We are celebrating the World Tourism Day on 27th September 2021. The theme of this year's World Tourism Day is "Tourism for Inclusive Growth", celebrating tourism's ability to drive inclusive development and the role it plays in promoting respect while generating opportunities for many millions across the globe.

May the Department reach the desired destination sailing the path of truth, honesty and sincerity!

My best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. A. Solomon'.

Dr. M. A. Solomon

Principal

Message



Asst. Prof. Arya M S

HoD in Charge - Department of Travel & Tourism
St. Albert's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam

It gives me great pleasure to pen down a few words about the travel magazine FERNWEH, yet another creative and hard work of the students of the Department of Travel and Tourism. I congratulate the whole team including the teachers and students of the Department of Travel and Tourism for bringing out such a beautiful magazine. This magazine shares the travel experience of the students, articles on different areas, and artistic and photographic work of the creative students. The ultimate aim of education is to bring out the best in the individual through all measures possible ranging from classroom learning, discussions, cultural performances, social activities, etc. I am sure that students of St. Albert's College(Autonomous), Ernakulam have privilege to all these facilities on the campus. I wish all my students the very best and I appreciate their effort to make such a wonderful magazine.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Arya M S'.

Asst. Prof. Arya M S

HoD in Charge
Department of Travel & Tourism

Staff Editorial



A Note From The Editorial Desk

Dear Readers

Greetings from the Albertian family!!

This first edition of FERNWEH makes its presence during this period of lockdown, caused due to COVID-19. Right now, we see ourselves, collectively facing this pandemic, a situation for which we had no experience and little preparation. And, at this time, when the whole world is battling against it, The department of Travel and Tourism of St Albert's College has added another feather to its cap; the Travel magazine, to provide our students a stage to bring out their creative thoughts and expression.

Michael Jordan said 'Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships.' This magazine, indeed, is an honest effort to showcase not just the talents of our budding authors but also to give them a platform to launch themselves and touch the sky. The outstanding travelogues and articles of our gifted and innovative minds are sure to captivate the imagination of the readers. With complete faith in their hard work, we are sure that their original ideas will certainly excite and elate your thoughts.

The Editorial team takes this opportunity to express its sincere gratitude to our Principal, Dr. M A Solomon, for entrusting us with the responsibility of adding another chapter to the history of St. Albert's College. We thank him for being a constant support throughout the process, from the conceptualization of the idea to the last stage of publication.

We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the students for their continued support to the institution and its endeavours. We hope that you would enjoy your journey as you sail through this enchanted ocean of brilliance. We wish you all happy and fun-filled days with your loved ones.

Asst. Prof. Merlin Mathew
Staff Editor





Student Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of "FERNWEH"

This magazine is going to be a very exciting issue as we're going to explore about the best travel blogs of our beloved students. Keep on reading to find about more amazing destinations out there. I swear this gonna be more exciting for reader's.

This travel magazine is all about the journeys which explored by the B Voc travel & tourism students. And there's a lot about the amazing destinations covered by the students including pictures, which motivates us to go. If you're a travel lover you should definitely read about these fabulous destinations. Travel is something which we'll loves to go again & again. And this magazine will definitely bring a wish you to cover these destinations.

Hope you will love reading it!

Enjoy!



Ms. Anjana K M
Student Editor



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MY TRIP TO

MALAYSIA

THE LAND OF MEMORIES



Author

Reshma Mary Suresh

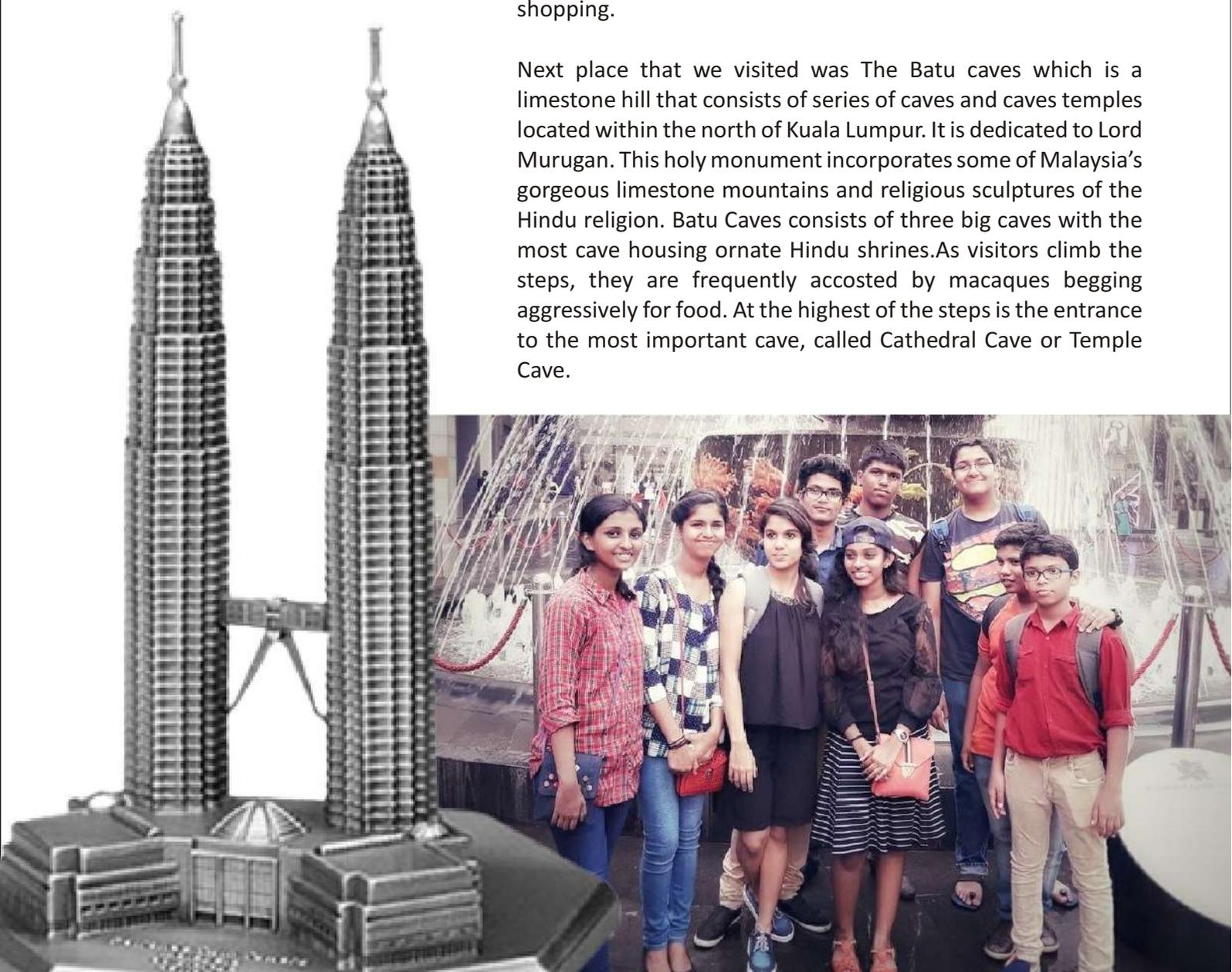
Traveling is a sense of adventure that excites people and also it is a big chance to learn about new cultures and the way people live in that country. Malaysia is one the best countries in the world that I have ever visited and I will encourage everyone to visit the country. The moment you land at the airport there is this welcoming atmosphere that makes you feel to travel and explore more about its beauty and culture. Most people are attracted to this country not just for its beautiful landscape, wildlife or beaches but also for its different religious practices.

Being a country with a mixture of religions it is right to say that religious tourism in Malaysia is one of the factors that make tourists flocks to this beautiful country. One fine day, I came to know that my dream is going to come true and I got a chance to travel to Malaysia with my friends. This trip was organised by my school. Our accommodation and other expenses in Malaysia were provided by the school, we just had to buy a ticket and visa. I was excited because it was my first international trip with my friends. It was four days trip. Our flight was in the evening and we reached Kuala Lumpur at midnight. We headed straight to the hotel and we had our dinner at one of the bases and watched a fountain show after.

The next day onwards we started visiting places in Kuala Lumpur. It is the capital city of Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur is also known as the largest and busiest city in Malaysia. In Kuala Lumpur, there are three places that we should not miss. They are Petronas Twin Towers, Golden Triangle Area and The Genting Highland Park. In Kuala Lumpur, I noticed a road that was very different which is The Golden Triangle Area. This Golden Triangle Area is also called the Kuala Lumpur's commercial, shopping, and entertainment hub. This Golden Triangle Area is a large area that encompasses many major streets. Three roads connect Golden Triangle Area – Jalan Imbi, Jalan Sultan Ismail, and Jalan Raja Chulan.

These roads form a triangle that borders the entire Golden Triangle Area. The first place I visited was Petronas Twin Tower. This tower is the largest twin building in Malaysia. It was established as the tallest skyscraper in the world from 1998 to 2004 and also the sixth telecommunication tower in the world. The Petronas twin tower rules the Kuala Lumpur skyline. The Petronas World Trade Centre comprises two towers identified as tower 1 and tower 2. Tower 1 is filled by Petronas and its subsidiaries, and Tower 2 has been made accessible to many businesses as office area on lease including Microsoft, Reuters, Al Jazeera English, Boeing, IBM, TCS, and several more. The 451.9 m long towers are represented and utilized in numerous popular culture films and games representing their value and recognition all around the world. The Petronas World Trade Centre is the base for the Malaysian oil and gas service. Petronas flaunts a sky bridge that grants unbelievable views of the town. The building is meant to mirror motifs of Islamic art in its steel and glass appearance with the towers itself made extensively from ferro concrete. Another place which I visited was a street called Petaling Street, the centre of Kuala Lumpur's original Chinatown which maintains much of its traditional atmosphere, particularly at night. Most of the tourists come here for shopping.

Next place that we visited was The Batu caves which is a limestone hill that consists of series of caves and caves temples located within the north of Kuala Lumpur. It is dedicated to Lord Murugan. This holy monument incorporates some of Malaysia's gorgeous limestone mountains and religious sculptures of the Hindu religion. Batu Caves consists of three big caves with the most cave housing ornate Hindu shrines. As visitors climb the steps, they are frequently accosted by macaques begging aggressively for food. At the highest of the steps is the entrance to the most important cave, called Cathedral Cave or Temple Cave.





Within it is the most important of the several temples among the location. At a lower level on the flight of steps is Dark Cave, which is typically closed to visitors. Other caves lie still closer to the bottom of the steps. Ramayana Cave has an entrance marked with a statue of the Hanuman, hero of the Indian epic poem Ramayana. The cave itself is lined with dioramas depicting scenes from the epic. The Cave Villa, which incorporates gallery Cave and Museum Cave, features more paintings and statues. This destination draws an enormous international crowd during Thaipusam, an annual festival that pays homage to Lord Muruga. The focal point of the temple is the 140-foot statue of Lord Muruga, which is visible from miles away. Batu caves in short also referred to as the 10th hill for Lord Muruga. This is the 100-year-old temple. I explored a number of the simplest cultural and natural sights, venues, and places in Malaysia. Cave enthusiasts are spoilt for choice when it comes to caving in Malaysia where there are hundreds of caves to explore ranging from those found in the vast and remote Mulu National Park, a world heritage site to popular tourist spots like Batu Caves. My favourite thing which I liked the most in Malaysia was Green Rain Forest which has a lovely scenery.

Another amazing place that I visited in Malaysia was The Sunway Lagoon Theme Park which had five different theme parks in one place. Sunway Lagoon Theme Park located just 15 km from Kuala Lumpur.

This amusement park is one of the good entertainment parks around Kuala Lumpur. Famous for its water rides, the park features Water Park, Scream Park, funfair, Extreme Park, and Wildlife Park in an 80-acre expanse. The Water Park contains the water slides, a man-made river, a surf beach, a wave pool which is the hottest attraction. The flow rider attracts tourist and tiny experience surfers to try their hands at surfing and bodyboarding. Water slide lovers can get inside the loops of the African Pythons and get spun around before being spat out of the large tubes. The Extreme Park involves skills and stamina to finish complicated rides. Whereas Scream Park provides interactive scary experiences for the not so faint-hearted. The rides and activities are designed to cater to all types age group.

Another spot named Istana Negara or the National Palace is the official residence of the King of Malaysia. This Majestic edifice is situated at Jalan Duta. It was officially declared as the National Palace in November 2011 replacing the old palace in Jalan Istana. It has 22 domes with the most important dome reaching up to a height of 40 meters. Tourist visits are limited to the outside of the palace.





The most distinguished landmark of the Malaysian capital, the Sultan Abdul Samad Building is an everlasting attraction amidst the rapidly changing city skyline. It was built in the year 1897 and was named after the reigning monarch of that time. The edifice served as the administrative building during the British era. Menara Kuala Lumpur is poised at a wide-ranging height of 421 meters double as Kuala Lumpur's best-known icon. Standing boldly atop Bukit Nanas Forest Reserve, it is the sixth tallest telecommunication tower in the world. Built to enhance the standard of telecommunication and broadcasting transmission, Menara Kuala Lumpur stands proudly as the symbol of Kuala Lumpur- 'The Garden city of Lights'. Menara Kuala Lumpur has many sights to offer from breathtaking views to top-class facilities, activities, and events. It has the right ingredients to please everyone. Come and see what it is like standing 276 meters above ground level for an once-in-a-lifetime experience with your family and friends.

Genting Highlands is an another amazing tourist spot in Malaysia as it offers the coolest and most natural attraction along with world class entertainment. The Genting Highlands are also known as the three hill stations on the western side of the Banjaran Titiwangsa Range. This Genting Highland is an amusement park that is divided into four indoor and outdoor zones – the Outdoor Theme Park, First World Indoor Theme Park, Water Park, and Video Games Park. Most of the families and friends come here for enjoying and relaxing because there's so much to do for everyone which makes them happy. Being a student, I realised that in Malaysia there is a wide range of customs and practices, some of which are different from what we practice in our country.

Malaysia comprises three major cultures; Malay, Chinese, and Indians (Tamilians are mainly seen). Malaysians celebrate various festivals such as Chinese New Year, Hari Raya Pusa, ThaiPusasm, Deepavali, and Christmas. There are different dressing styles peoples of Malaysia follows. The Chinese women wear the cheongsam, which is a one-piece dress with a high neck, diagonally closed with small clips or toggles. The Malay wears the Baju Kurung and the Baju Kebaya. According to their traditional system, men wear silk or cotton skirts and shirts with a scarf-like piece of cloth tied around their waist. The Indians as usual were seen wearing sherwani, lungi, dhoti, kurta, and pajamas.

The major problem we faced was adjusting with the language as Malay is their official language and English was used very little. The pace of life in Malaysia is gentle, steady and everyone moves with a purpose and goal. The climate in Malaysia is different from our country as it is generally warm throughout the year. They have only two seasons it's the dry and rainy seasons. The other thing is Malaysian food. Their main food is served with steamed rice, coconut milk, curry chicken or beef, fried anchovies, and sambal. While traveling in Malaysia I saw a wedding near the city. Their wedding style was unique from other countries. There were so many specialties in Malay weddings. Their wedding took place in their traditional way.

In conclusion, I think that the stability and peacefulness of Malaysia is what makes the country unique and peaceful to live in. It is a great place for people who love hot and humid climates and a paradise for food lovers.



PILGRIMAGE TO MEDJUGORJE

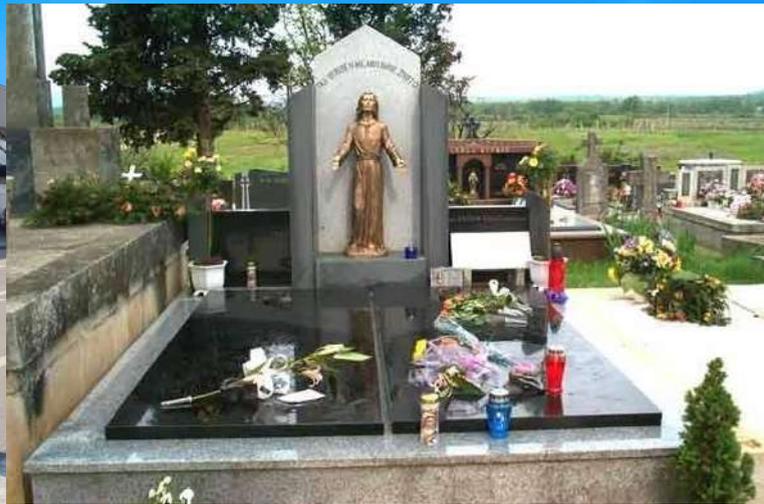


Author

Mr. Sidharth Somasekharan

I started my journey with a group of Pilgrims from Cochin international Airport on 25th Sep 2019 and reached Sarajevo Airport on 26th Sep 2019, it was a total of 12 + hours of the journey including transit at Dubai International Airport.

At Sarajevo airport, our pre-booked buses were waiting for us to drive us to Medjugorje. From Sarajevo to Medjugorje it took almost 3 hours to travel on the road but I could not feel any tiredness because of the mesmerizing views throughout the journey. The whole route was full of nature's beauty, the hills, the breathtaking valleys, the rivers, the lakes, the tunnels, the pin curves, the bridges, history, in short, our guide kept on explaining the whole scene and we all excitingly looked for them through the bus glasses.



Even heaven welcomed us with the sign of the cross in the sky. I never expect such a site because people has been saying the stories but this story turned out into reality upon such a site from above.

Finally, by evening we reached the place of rest and logged into our rooms in a pre-booked hotel.

Though physically we were tired mentally a lot more energy was there to go out and some of our co-travelers were already out to St James Church but I was quite lazy to move out of my cushion bed and planned to start all next day freshly.

27th Sep 2019 morning I rushed to The Church of St. James it's the symbol and the heart of the Parish of Medjugorje. This world-known, two-tower church was under construction from 1934 to 1969.

At the entrance to the grounds of St. James Parish, there is a beautiful Statue of Our Lady, the Queen of Peace standing there to welcome us. Day and night, pilgrims can be seen praying to their Mothers and thanking them for calling them to Medjugorje.

After the mass, we just walked through the open ground behind the St James Church where many confessions were going and some of our team members joined the confession queue.

Then we walked back to our hotel for breakfast



which was at 10 mins walkable distance away from the church premises. After breakfast, our guide asked us to be ready for touring the Church and its local surroundings.

At 10:00 we all reached back to the entrance of St James Church where Our Lady of Peace stood greeting. We all moved behind the parish of St. James their is a beautiful tree-lined path lined with five stunning mosaics that depict the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary. Pilgrims often walk the Via Domini, contemplating the public life and ministry of Jesus as they pray.

After contemplating the public life of Jesus, we will come to the end of the path where the Statue of the Risen Savior is located. this stunning 30-foot sculpture depicting the resurrected Christ stepping from the cross with His arms raised in triumph. Since 2000, the statue has miraculously dripped a liquid substance from its right knee, with a chemical makeup similar to human tears. Many pilgrims bring towels or handkerchiefs to absorb the "liquid," believing it to be a miraculous substance.

Further, we moved forward to Visit the tomb of Fr. Slavko which is in the Local cemetery Kovacica Spent some time with the group in prayers then came back to the open ground behind St James Parish where open Mass is held our guide started explaining about the war and suffering people of Medjugorje after all these it was almost 3 pm and all went back to the hotel for rest. By 5 PM we came out to visit local shops outside the church area where different types of artworks and sculptors and rosary, books, ornaments, stones, food, etc could be seen. By 8 PM we were back to our rooms for dinner and rest.

28th Sep 2019

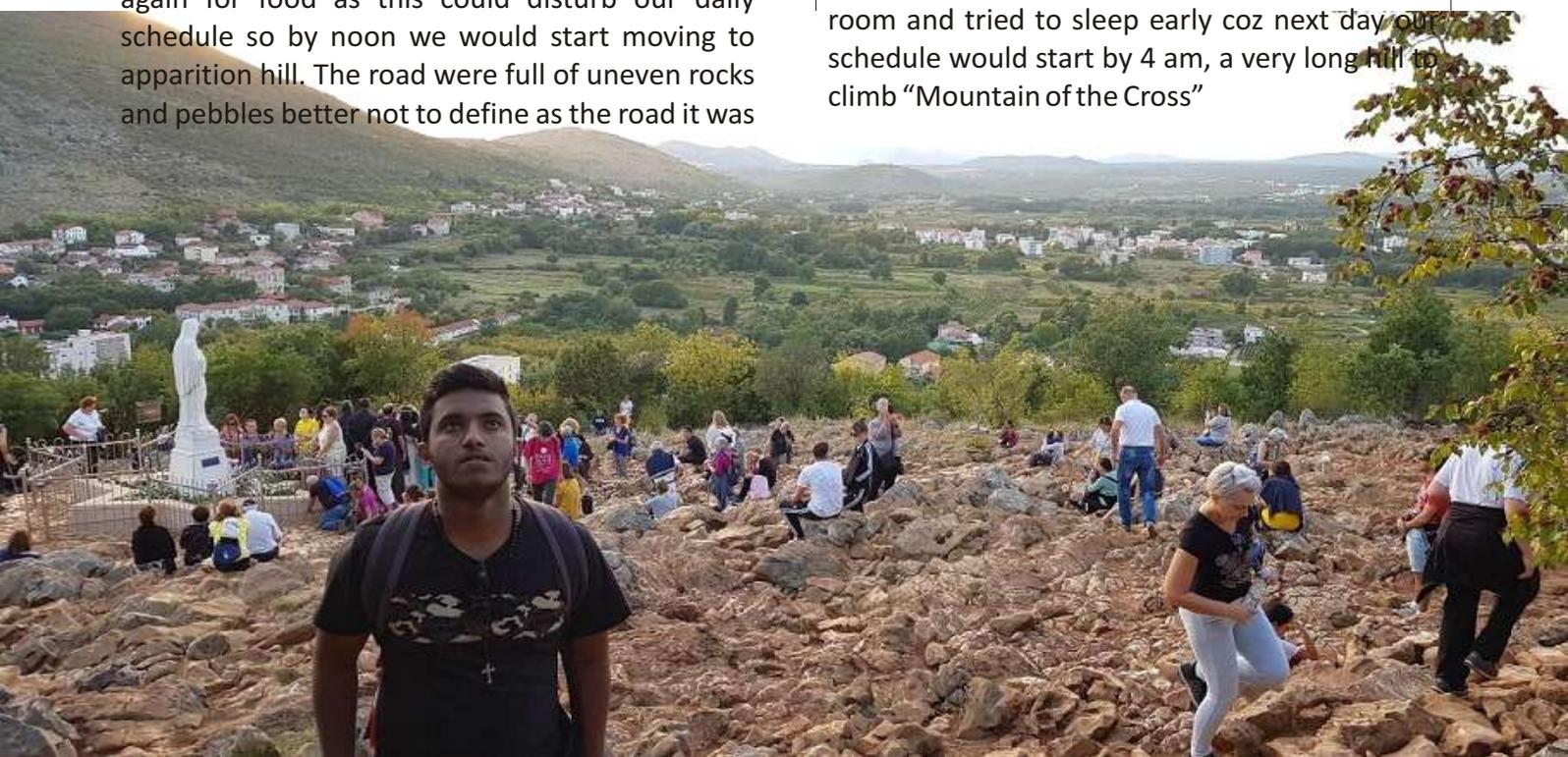
Morning our first schedule was to visit the St James Church for holy mass and back to the room for breakfast, today we were scheduled to climb the blue cross mountain to spend some time in reflection and meditation. The Blue Cross is a very special place and an easy climb for those unable to climb to the top of Apparition Hill. A Blue Cross marks the spot where Our Lady appeared to the visionaries as children when they were hiding from the Communist police. This is also the spot where the visionary Mirjana typically goes on the 2nd day of each month to receive a special message from Our Lady for "those who do not yet believe." In addition, Our Lady sometimes appears to the visionary Ivan here in the summer months.

We had carried some snacks and water so as not to go back during lunch hours, my whole trip went without lunch because generally once we are out of the hotel after breakfast no one would go back again for food as this could disturb our daily schedule so by noon we would start moving to apparition hill. The road were full of uneven rocks and pebbles better not to define as the road it was

just a path. Most of the aged and unhealthy pilgrims failed to reach this destination by their own.

In 2006, to honor the 25th anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions, a statue of the Queen of Peace was installed near the top of Apparition Hill to mark the spot where the Blessed Mother first appeared to the visionaries on June 24, 1981. This spot is considered the "spiritual summit" that pilgrims strive to reach when ascending to Apparition Hill. Funds to commission the statue were donated by a Korean family whose child was healed in Medjugorje. The statue was created by the Italian sculptor Dino Felici who also designed the marble Queen of Peace statue at the entrance to the parish grounds in 1987.

Around 5pm we planned to move back since evening holy communion in the open ground behind St. James Church needed to be attended. By 8pm everything is silent and people make this beautiful movement to visit the candle park area which is again within the church premises. If you're looking for a quiet place for prayer and meditation, this is it. Here pilgrims light votive candles for their loved ones who have passed away and for the numerous intentions they bring with them to Medjugorje, laying their troubles, hopes, and prayers at the foot of the Crucified Jesus. The area is nicely decorated and convenient for silent prayer and meditations. After spending some time we came back to the room and tried to sleep early coz next day our schedule would start by 4 am, a very long hill to climb "Mountain of the Cross"



29th Sep 2019

I got up at 3 AM although very tired and hard to push myself from the bed my father kept on reminding me that I will not get this opportunity ever and forced me to get out of my bed. Finally, all joined at the hotel lobby and started the journey to The Mountain of the Cross exactly at 4 am.

It was dark with some street lights here and there and we had some torch lights plus the mobile torch to proceed for our journey, all were reciting Hail Mary until the starting point of the hill it was almost 45 mins walk from the room to the hill. Now starts the real torture a steep hill to climb with not even one rock evenly placed, every step had to be highly raised to be precisely kept because we could always slip, but all were full of devotion and anxiety to reach the top before sunrise. There were 14 stations of the cross which gave us a break to stop but to my surprise, I saw some pilgrims on their knees which was something impossible for me to think. Originally, 14 simple wooden crosses lined the rocky path up Mount Krizevac, so the pilgrims could reflect on the Way of the Cross as they climbed the rugged terrain to the top. But in 1988, Italian sculptor Carmelo Puzzolo created huge bronze reliefs of the Stations, which now reside in the rocks beside the 14 original crosses. A 15th bronze relief is located beneath the cross of Krizevac, which depicts the resurrection. Each station weighs more than 300 pounds and was carried up the hill and placed in position by the young people of Medjugorje. The Way of the Cross is prayed each Friday at 4 p.m. (2.p.m. in the winter).

Finally, by 6a.m. we were on the top of the hill and full of excitement. Climbing Cross Mountain is a moving experience. It is an introspective ascent during which pilgrims ponder their relationship with God and the need to draw closer to Him. "Krizevac" means "Mountain of the Cross" in Croatian. In 1933, villagers built a 16-ton, 29-foot cross on the mountain to commemorate the crucifixion. It contains a relic from the True Cross of Christ given to the people of Medjugorje by Pope Pius XI. The inscription on

the cross reads, "To Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the human race, as a sign of their faith, love, and hope, in remembrance of the 1900 years since the death of Jesus."

Almost dead on the top and watching the beauty of the nature we stayed there until 8 a.m. in prayers and meditation. Now was the next task of climbing down you may imagine the scene anyhow. By 10am, we all reached back to the hotel and I stayed back to rest until evening. At night we just went out to shops and spent some time with my father at candle park

30th Sep 2019

We visited some churches, names of which I cannot recall but one was famous for having St Faustina's relic. By noon we were scheduled for waterfalls to discover the natural beauty of the Kravice and Kocuša waterfalls. This site is an inevitable day trip often combined with Medjugorje, Kocuša Waterfall, and a few more Bosnian biggest attractions. By evening our trip was over and we were back to the hotel, all got busy into packing up and final rush to shop to buy the statues and gifts and rosaries etc as this was our last day in Medjugorje and tomorrow by 8 am our bus will move back to Sarajevo airport.

1st Oct 2019

Morning all visited St James church to say goodbye to our Lady of Peace and started our journey back, by noon we reached Sarajevo airport and said goodbye to our lady. The next day morning we were back to our home with lots of memories of Medjugorje.





A TRIP TO EUROPE



Author

Asst. Prof. Merlin Mathew

Ask anyone who is a keen or aspiring traveler and one place almost everyone is keen to explore is hands down the continent of Europe. Breathtakingly beautiful sceneries, clean air, friendly people, football fanatics, architectural wonders, palaces, castles, local food, music and culture, Europe is packed with all of these and much more. From warm breezy beaches, to tall mountains touching the sky- vast yellow meadows and floral beds to green forest expanses, winding roads, crystal blue lakes and bright blue skies, my trip to Europe with my husband was without a doubt one of the best travel experiences of my life.

The two of us decided to make our EuroTrip the trip of our lifetime and locked down on visiting the 5 countries of Vienna, Germany, Prague, Hungary and Slovakia for a holistic experience of the terrain, culture, food and locals and decided to leave the rest of Europe for our next visit. Having done an intense research before booking our AirBnB's in Europe, we specifically chose to spend at least 3 days in each country rather than a touch and go of the vast continent that Europe is. Many people would typically include France and Spain in their Euro Trip- but this was ours, our special trip, tailor made by us to fulfill our travel goals and we came back with zero complaints, only wanting to plan the next trip to Europe whenever we get the chance to do so next.

We landed in Vienna, Austria and straight away took an overnight bus to Germany. The city is host to a beautiful historic city center, large parks and gardens (with surfing), hearty German food, and beer halls filled with friendly people. There is also Munich's famous clock, art collection, the palace, and the famous English Garden. It's a place of beauty, art, and history.

Traveling around Munich will give you a different look at German culture. The city has a lot to offer to the travelers and is also an incredible base for people visiting other places in Bavaria.

We discovered the capital of Bavaria at our own pace with a hop on hop off bus tour. You can hop off the bus at the attractions you want to explore and skip the ones you don't. We saw the most beautiful sights of the state capital of Munich in this double-decker bus. We explored places like Karlsplatz, Pinakotheken, Palace of Nymphenburg, BMW Welt & Museum, Olympiapark to name a few.

This trip also takes you to the Marienplatz, from where you can also visit the Frauenkirche, the Hofbräuhaus or the Viktualienmarkt, the Nationaltheater and the Karlsplatz-Stachus.

One of the places we really loved visiting was the BMW Museum & BMW Welt. The BMW Museum was housed next to BMW's head office in northern Munich. It features exhibits about the history of BMW cars and motorcycles with historic vehicles and prototypes, plus displays on alternative fuel and traffic management. If you take a tour, you'll even get some behind-the-scenes views too.

My husband being a crazy football fan and a long time Germany supporter, we had to visit the Allianz Arena. The heart of football in northern Munich: at the Allianz Arena, one can marvel at top-class matches and enjoy the FC Bayern Museum.

It was built to the plans drafted by renowned architects Herzog & de Meuron, the Allianz Arena has become one of Munich's main landmarks since it opened back in 2005.

The stadium holds up to 75,000 people, all of whom enjoy an outstanding view of the action thanks to the steep grandstands. Its impressive design featuring almost 3,000 air pockets makes a visual impact before you've even arrived. The pockets light up in red and white at FC Bayern München home games and in white at Germany matches. On special occasions, such as St. Patrick's Day, they shine green.

We took a guided tour around the arena which gave us a lot of insight into the stadium's inner workings. They took us from the team changing rooms and player's tunnel, through to the main grandstand. The FC Bayern Museum is also well worth a visit: Germany's largest museum dedicated to a sports club took us on an emotional journey, starting with the club's foundation in 1900 and ending with its latest triumphs.



After an exhausted long day of exploring and sightseeing we hanged out at the Hofbräuhaus. It is the world's most famous beer hall and visiting here is a must if you love beer. The Hofbräuhaus was built by in 1607 and was originally used as a brewery. It was remodeled after the brewery moved to a new site in the suburbs. More than 100 active groups of regulars visit Hofbräuhaus, and the oldest regulars have held their table for 70 years. It's the most popular beer hall during Oktoberfest too, and regularly hosts year-round events and live music.

The next destination on our trip was to Prague in Czech Republic. Prague is a gorgeous, well-preserved medieval city with a rich history, expansive parks, Vegas-style nightlife and a hint of romance. It holds a special place in my heart as we spent almost a week here in Prague and is undoubtedly a magical city. Walking through the narrow lanes of the city was like a fairytale. What fascinated me the most were the cobbled streets, quaint medieval houses and an incredible charm in every place we visited there.

Since we were new to the city, as usual we stuck to our HOHO Bus to get around the city of Prague. The bus tour gave us a feast for our eyes on all the historical and structural grandeurs of Prague. They take you the main sites like the Old Town Square, Charles Bridge, Prague Castle, the Jewish Quarter, and more. Prague's most popular attraction is the Prague Castle. Looming above the Vltava's left bank, its serried ranks of spires, towers and palaces dominate the city centre like a fairy-tale fortress. According to the Guinness World Records it's the world's largest ancient castle complex. The castle, which lords over the city, consists of multiple sections: St. Vitus Cathedral, the Old Royal Palace, The Story of Prague Castle, St. George's Basilica, Golden Lane with Daliborka Tower, the Powder Tower, and Rosenberg Palace.

The most famous structure is St. Vitus Cathedral this is the large building you see when you look up at the castle from outside the city walls.

From the castle, you can take a nice walk along the river back into the center of town. There are walking and bike paths, as well as places to stop, sit, and maybe read a book. It's mostly locals around here, despite it being about 20 minutes from the city center. Back in town, we checked out this medieval tower- The Powder Tower. During the 17th century, the tower used to store gunpowder.

After we took a complete tour on the sightseeing bus we realized that most of the places can be explored by just walking. So we decided to come back to some of the places we really loved so that we can spend more time there.

Old town square is another place where we spent a lot of time hanging out. The people-watching was unbeatable as tourists, families, students, and touts passed through the square. We sat on one of the benches enjoying homemade ice creams and sorbets. European ice creams were the best for me. Moreover, there were a number of talented musicians and artists ranging from jazz musicians to Scottish bagpipe players, and everything in between that performed in the square.

Then Watch the most hyped attraction in all of Prague- The Astronomical Clock. The hourly chime that people line up for is absolutely climactic, the detail and artistry of the clock make it one of the most beautiful thing in Europe.

We walked for quite some time in town square area and then started walking towards the Charles Bridge. River, bridge, music, views from river, statues and buildings around the square - we simply lost track of time in the beauty of everything.





Prague doesn't have the best reputation when it comes to food. Everyone thinks of big stews with dumplings. Meat, meat and more meat. Oh, and lots of beer thrown in there for good measure. Yes, the food was like that, but it was really delicious, hearty and warming too. For us, whenever we got to a new city we jumped on a food tour. We realized that was the best way of learning about the local cuisine

Some of the food that we tried included traditional braised beef with dumplings, Goulash, Roasted pigeon, Deer meat steak. We also enjoyed an authentic Czech rolled pastry called trdelnik.

One more thing that we wanted to do before leaving Prague was Sky Diving. It had been in my bucket list for a very long time. Though my husband was really not keen on trying this, I had no apprehensions about it. I knew it was going to be a life time experience for us. So I convinced him and blocked our last day in Prague for this.

The tandem jump instructor gave us safety briefing and explained everything that will happen next, and answered any questions we had. The plane climbs into an altitude of up to 4200 m (15000 ft), which takes about 15 minutes so we enjoyed ourselves while looking at beautiful Czech countryside.

Then a green light flashed, plane doors opened and my heart stopped for a while and off you go, jump! Adrenaline rush was unlike anything I've ever experienced before. Flying like a bird, free falling for about 1 minute at the speed of more than 200 km/h (125 mph), then parachute opens and you are cruising the sky for another 6 minutes.

For the landing we simply lift our legs up in the air and our professional tandem pilot got us safely to the ground again.

We also got a certificate and a t-shirt for keeping it as a memory.

From there we reached back to our hotel moved out to catch our next bus to the next destination which was Budapest in Hungary.

Here we visited some old monuments and undertook an exploration of the city's many statues. City Park and the Széchenyi thermal baths are visited in Pest, the city centre, and across the Danube, in Buda, the Castle Hill which has its share of statues, Gellért Hill with the Citadella and back to Pest to visit the large market.

Budapest has something for everyone from dramatic history and flamboyant architecture to healing thermal waters and a nightlife that is unrivalled in Eastern and Central Europe.

Budapest's beauty is not all God given; humankind has played a role in shaping this pretty face too. Architecturally, the city is a treasure trove, with enough baroque, neoclassical, Eclectic and art nouveau buildings to satisfy everyone. Overall, though, Budapest has a fin de siècle feel to it, for it was then, during the capital's 'golden age' in the late 19th century, that most of what you see today was built.

They say the past is another country, but it's always been just around the corner in Budapest. Witness the bullet holes and shrapnel pockmarks on buildings from WWII and the 1956 Uprising. There are sad reminders like the poignant Shoes on the Danube memorial, but ones, too, of hope and reconciliation like the 'sword' of the former secret-police building on Andrásy út now beaten into the 'ploughshare' that is the House of Terror, with both sides of the story left and right told.



We spent a total of three days here at Budapest. We explored many places on foot and enjoyed the local cuisine here too.

From Budapest we took another bus to Bratislava in Slovakia. Bratislava is the capital city of Slovakia and it we just spent one day here. Everything to see was at a walkable distance and one of the most fascinating thing was that our airbnb was right next to the Presidential Palace. Some of the places we explored were Bratislava Castle, Michael's Gate, The Slovak National Theatre, the Grassalkovich Palace, Primate's Palace, Hviezdoslav Square, Statues in the Old Town and Danube river.

Our last stop was Vienna in Austria. We again took a bus from Bratislava and We were to back to the same place from where we started our journey. We spent our last 4 days our Euro trip here. Vienna was just as beautiful as any other European country. Vienna (Wien) owes much of its charm and rich history to its splendid location on the banks of the Danube River. For centuries the gateway between West and East Europe, it was the natural nucleus of the once sprawling Habsburg Empire, and to this day remains Austria's most important commercial and cultural hub

Vienna continues to attract visitors with its many great historical sightseeing opportunities, its fabled collections of art, glittering palaces, and exceptional musical heritage.

This appreciation of the nation's rich culture is still very evident in Vienna's magnificent museums, its fine concert halls, and one of the world's great opera houses. With an unmistakably cosmopolitan atmosphere, Vienna retains a distinctive charm and flair. This is very much accentuated by its fine old architecture, its famous horse-cabs (Fiaker), as well as its splendid coffeehouses with their famous Viennese cakes and pastries.

Some of the places we visited here include Historic Hofburg, Imperial Schönbrunn Palace and Gardens, St. Stephen's Cathedral, A Baroque Masterpiece: Belvedere Palace, The Vienna State Opera House, Kunsthistorisches Museum and Maria-Theresien-Platz, St. Charles Church, Vienna's Museum Quarter, The Austrian Parliament Building. We visited most of the sites taking the hop on hop off bus and some of it by just walking around.

Overall our trip to Europe was an incredible experience filled with lots of sightseeing, lip smacking foods, photographs and shopping. Every country was different from each other and had its own charm. Now I just wait for an opportunity to explore rest of the countries in Europe. I think we can never have enough of Europe. And most importantly we learnt so much about the different cultures and travelling for sure makes a person more grounded.



KOLKATA

THE CITY OF JOY



Author

Amitha Babu

I heard the announcement — ‘Passengers of the Indigo flight departing from Kochi Airport to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Airport in Kolkata via Hyderabad are requested to proceed to Gate No. 6 for boarding. I carried my bags, showed my boarding passes and made my way toward a tunnel-like structure that would end at the entrance of the aircraft. I got in and the air hostesses greeted me. After 30 minutes layover in Hyderabad, I took the final flight to Kolkata. It was about 15 minutes from Kolkata when I saw the bright yellow lights of the beautiful city from my window. Finally, I landed in Kolkata and took a taxi to my cousin's house at Bhavanipore where I was staying. I had a yummy dinner and a good sleep after the long journey.



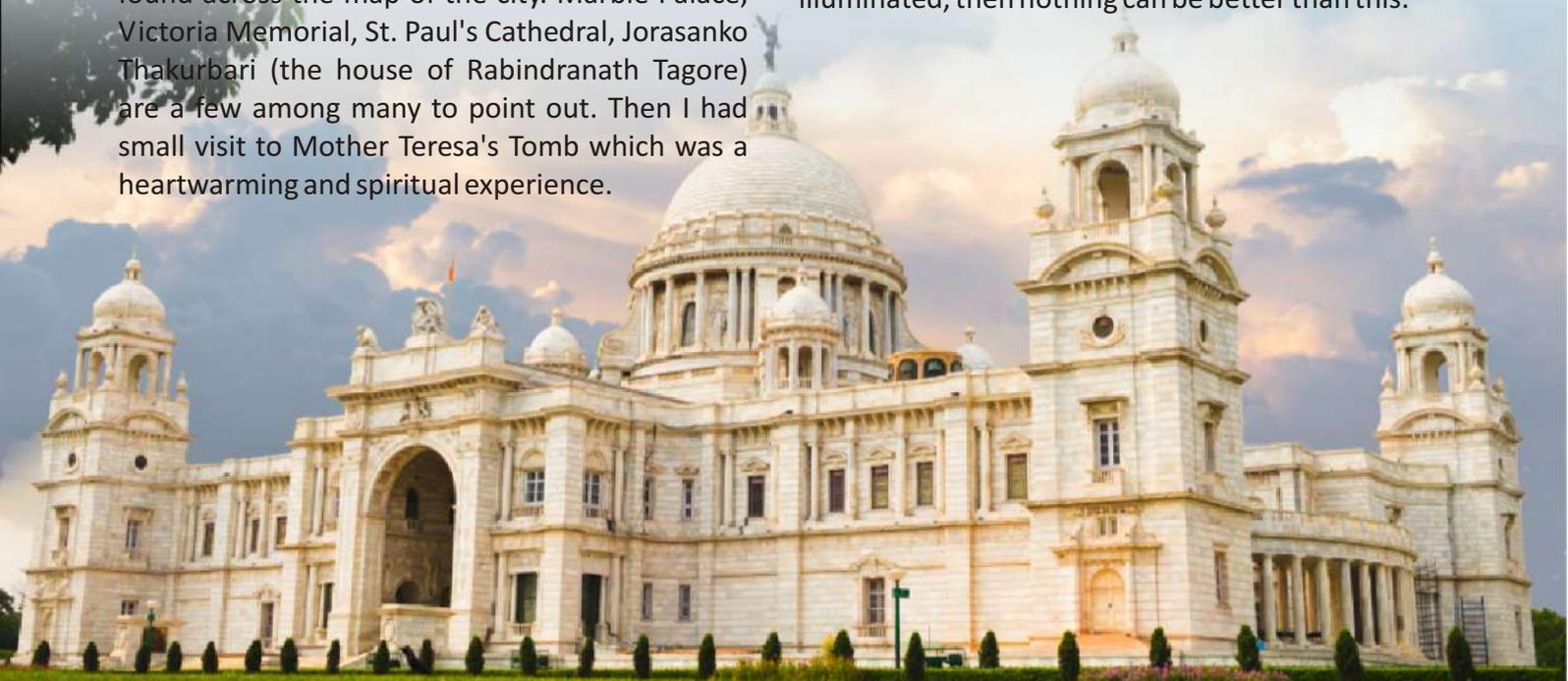
The next day I visited the Victoria Memorial Hall and I took a ride in a horse-drawn carriage. I took many photographs of the memorial. After reaching that place I entered that palatial building. The building was a mixture of Mughal, Venetian, and Egyptian architecture. Inside the building, there were several galleries namely arms gallery, sculpture gallery, royal gallery, Calcutta gallery, picture gallery and many more. We were mostly attracted by the huge collection of Armour of the bygone era. The experience was a fascinating one. Besides that, picture gallery attracted me and my family the most. It was full of masterpieces by renowned artists. Other galleries were also full of notable creations. The garden in front of that great piece of architecture attracted our attention. It was full of tourists and travelers. Everyone was enjoying to the content of their heart. I sat on the ground of the garden. The management of the Memorial Hall kept the building and garden in very clean and in good condition. Then I went shopping at the local Gullies of Kolkata. Then I went to Mother Teresa Tomb and spent some time over there. Kolkata is called the City of Joy and it is very aptly named. And why not, when you have its varied culture, rich heritage, sinful cuisines and last but not the least, the street food to make you happy.

This city is a better place for people who are looking forward to treating their inner explorers, as the city is scrambled with hidden jewels and heritage places from the early British Raj. Several old buildings, palaces and monuments can be found across the map of the city. Marble Palace, Victoria Memorial, St. Paul's Cathedral, Jorasanko Thakurbari (the house of Rabindranath Tagore) are a few among many to point out. Then I had small visit to Mother Teresa's Tomb which was a heartwarming and spiritual experience.

Then I went for a car ride on Howrah Bridge and Hoogly Bridge. Hoogly River is the main water source for the people of Kolkata and also the livelihood of many by providing fish and boating services. It was a heartwarming experience by knowing the life of local people where they live together and work together to meet their daily expenses. The Howrah Bridge is a significant landmark of Kolkata. There are a total of four bridges namely- Vidyasagar Setu bridge, Vivekananda Setu and the Nivedita Setu bridge that was built recently. It is said that the bridge carries the traffic of 100,000 vehicles and 150,000 pedestrians.

Then I had a quick visit to the Birla planetarium. The exterior of this planetarium is modeled on the famous Sanchi Buddhist stupa. This place is just a 10-minute walk from the Victoria Memorial. It is the largest planetarium in Asia. Birla Planetarium shows space-related shows in different languages. The average length of a show is about 1 hour. The planetarium also has an electronic laboratory and an astronomy gallery that has a large collection of astronomical paintings and models. It was an awesome experience as an Indian to experience astronomical beauty.

For the next day, I had no plans other than to experience the architectural beauty of Biswa Bangla Gate. Anyone who wants to experience Biswa Bangla Gate should visit it morning and evening to know two different phases of its architectural brilliance. Biswa Bangla Gate is a hanging restaurant known as Kolkata Gate. If you want a mesmerizing dinner watching the beautiful cityscape of Kolkata with its tiny lights illuminated, then nothing can be better than this.



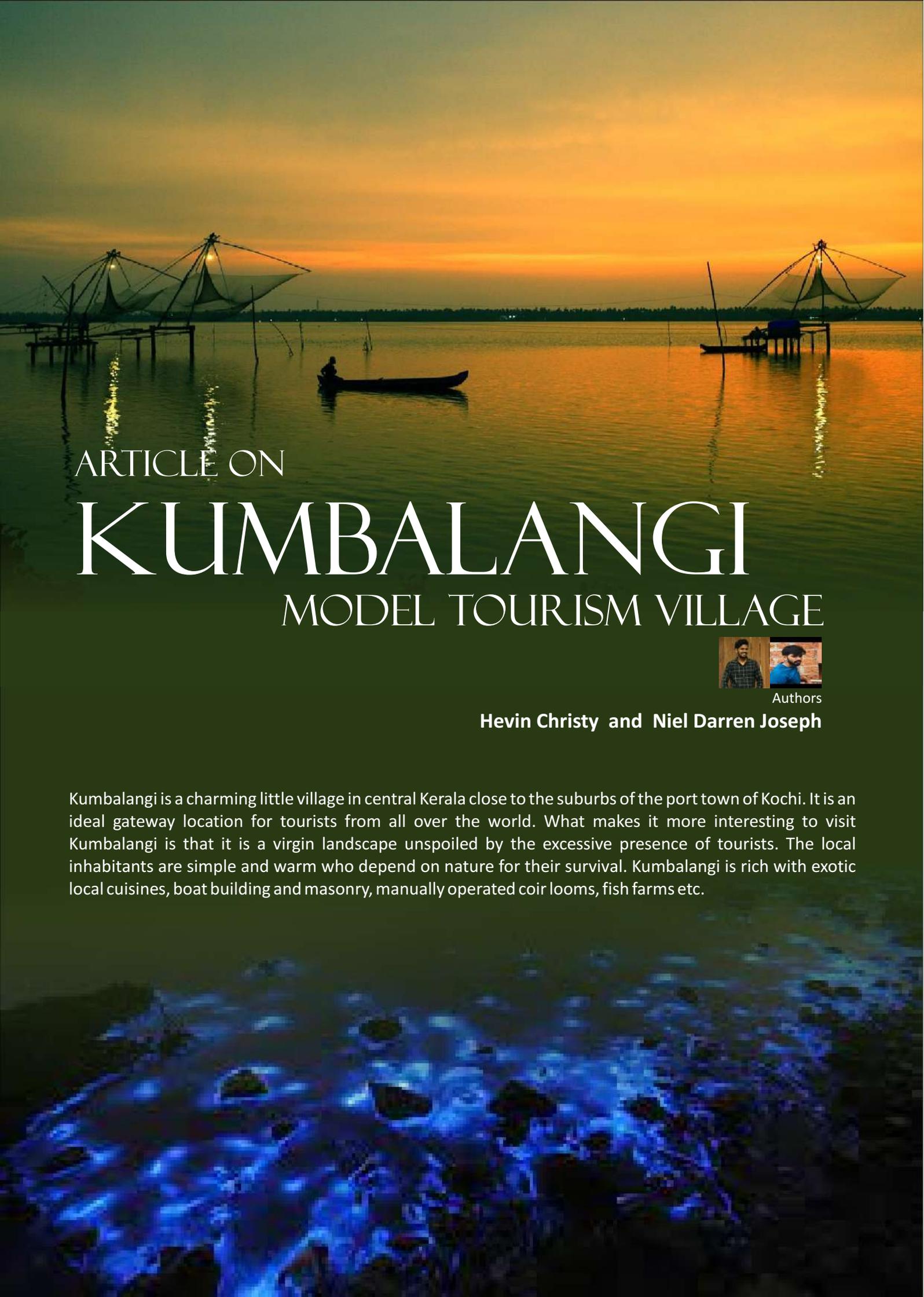


Talking about festivals Durga Pooja is fondly referred to as Pujo, this is undoubtedly the biggest celebration in the city and an experience to remember. Amidst the joyful mayhem and colorful celebrations, we can feel the divine presence as we gaze into the eyes of the benevolent deity, and understand why Durga Puja is the cultural and religious extravaganza that it is. The Puja pandals showcase such artistic brilliance and innovative designs that you'll be spellbound and awestruck by their splendor and beauty. As many of us have seen Puja festival in movies especially in the movie- Kahani, where women wear Red and White sarees and marking up to 10 days of festival.

Talking about the food here, there's just one word that is enough, 'sinful'. Be it famous old eateries which have been there for generations, or be it the abundant street food stalls, the city has a great deal to offer to the foodies. It is economical and cheap too. Probably the most economical among all other major cities of the country. Be it the sweetness of Rasgulla or the spiciness of Golbarir Kosha Mangsho (chicken curry), one can never get enough of the food. The city also hosts the world-famous cricket ground, 'Eden Gardens', and is home to the world Cup-winning, ever beloved cricketer Sourav Ganguly.

To sum it up, one can never get enough of this city and will always want to re-visit. That was an amazing and most pleasurable traveling experience for me.





ARTICLE ON

KUMBALANGI

MODEL TOURISM VILLAGE



Authors

Hevin Christy and Niel Darren Joseph

Kumbalangi is a charming little village in central Kerala close to the suburbs of the port town of Kochi. It is an ideal gateway location for tourists from all over the world. What makes it more interesting to visit Kumbalangi is that it is a virgin landscape unspoiled by the excessive presence of tourists. The local inhabitants are simple and warm who depend on nature for their survival. Kumbalangi is rich with exotic local cuisines, boat building and masonry, manually operated coir looms, fish farms etc.

Kumbalangi is the first model tourism village in India. The north, east, and south side of Kumbalangi are fully surrounded and the west is partially surrounded by backwater. Neighbouring eastern side is Aroor and the southern side Ezhupunna belongs to the Alleppey district. On the northern side, the neighbouring place is Perumpadappu of Cochin Corporation and is connected by a bridge. The land of Kumbalangi covering an area of 16 sq. km, with a population strength of about 37,000, the place is divided into Kumbalangi, Kallanchery, and Anjilithara sectors. Vast stretches of serene backwaters, an ideal setting for country boat cruises, indigenous fishing, crab farming, and prawn culture are all available in plenty at Kumbalangi.

Kumbalangi is a lovely, serene island that has been developed under the Integrated Tourism Village project as a model tourism village. Here one can see how tourism has grown without disturbing the natural beauty and ecological balance of the place. On the west side, we can see paddy fields around the coconut palm-filled island. In the season from August to October a type of bird called Thummaram kuruvi belongs to the weaver bird group in large number come here and make their nest on the tips of coconut palm leaves. The hanging nests have a 3 feet length. At the time that area will be filled with the chirp of birds. Sunset and sunrise view from the backwater shore is thrilling. Tourists can spend some enjoying moments in the backwaterside. The golden paddy chaffs that bow down with the weight set against a golden sunset is a silent sight of beauty, which adds to the feel of experiencing the village.

Kumbalangi is surrounded by Vembanad Lake. More than a hundred Chinese fishing nets form a ring around the village, indicating both the occupation of the people here and the rich aquatic life in the area.

The presence of dense mangroves ensures enough breeding ground for prawns, crabs, oysters, and small fishes. Milkfish jumping in the backwater of Kumbalangi is a refreshing view. The village is home to fishermen, farmers, labourers, toddy tappers, and coir spinners all alike. Another occupation that's seen quite a revival is that of boatmen. The village is well connected by road to the mainland. However, tourists are keen on cruises. Fisherfolk and boatmen also demonstrate various fishing techniques for the tourists.

Traditional crab farming and the "I catch, you fry" style of backwater cruise are also available for tourists. Kumbalangi provides a fascinating glimpse into the livelihood of villagers and their age-old, magnificent culture. They get a chance to accompany the local fisherman in their daily outings to the backwaters. Tourists can take a stroll in lush paddy fields, toil with the farmers, and picnic at the mangroves. They can set sail on a boat cruise, or stay adrift in a kettuvallom (traditional rice boat used as houseboat) on the backwaters. Services of boatmen are available but you can also venture out alone on country boats. Kalagramam, an artist's village on four acres of land, displays traditional fishing equipment and handicrafts of the region.

Exotic varieties of the backwater catch spice up every meal. The coastal ambience and ethnic cuisines are some of the highlight of Kumbalangi. The delicious Kerala Style foods and meals, be it seafood or rice and other cereal dishes, the emphasis is on 'healthy food', less use of oil, sugar, and artificial additives, and more use of natural herbs, spices flavorings, and coconut. The Kumbalangi cuisine is known for its spicy and hot foods. Enthralling fried, steamed, and curried fish dishes tempt seafood lovers. Dried Fish, Chilled fish, fried fish, and fish moly are some of the special dishes available here. There is a huge demand for fish and seafood, such as prawns and shrimp. Traditionally, food is served on a banana leaf. Tender coconut water is a refreshing nutritious thirst quencher. The crunchy papadam, banana, and jackfruit chips can give French-fry a run for their money any day. Everything is available locally. Meter boat is one of the interesting attractions here.





An old but experienced person who prepares meter tea has captured a large media attraction. The local tea shop where this old man prepares meter tea with a swift speed at more than two-meter height is a much-anticipated view to watch

Another specialty seen in Kumbalangi is "KAVARU". Kavaru- Bioluminescence or sea sparkle in local parlance, the light emitted by the microorganisms like bacteria, fungi, and algae creates this natural phenomenon. Kavaru is compared to the light produced by thousands of fireflies simultaneously. It's such a beautiful view, which is seen at rare places. Kavaru can last for weeks or months, but there are possibilities for it to stay longer. St Peter's church, St Joseph's church, Holy Mary's Azhikakam, San Jose, Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, St Martin de pros church, are some of the churches in Kumbalangi. People in the island celebrate festivals, with lots of fun and happiness. Tourists' visiting Kumbalangi are increasing day by day and films, short films etc are been shot in this island.

The film "Kumbalangi nights" directed by Madhu C Narayanan was shot here. The story revolved around Kumbalangi and the lifestyle of the people on this island.

The main occupation of the 30,000-odd people living here is fishing. Farming, crab-farming, and coir-matting is the other livelihood option. As a part of the eco-tourism concept, many houses in the village offer homestays. Kumbalangi is a sustainable project that makes a difference. Not only does it preserve nature and the environment, but it also pays homage to a rich culture and heritage. The holistic implementation of the initiative has delivered many benefits to villagers, including forms of income, a better understanding of urban dwellers, and economic value for activities, better respect for the environment and improved water supply and sanitation facilities, etc.

Kumbalangi is a model tourism village that provides lodging facilities to the visitors which is closely linked to the local environment and culture that are ranging from homestay to the resorts. Senith Global, Aquatic floating resort, sea star beach homes, Le petit elephant, Heritage methanam, Kallanchery Retreat, Michel's lay land homes, Haco lake view, Arshatheram resort are the few top resorts in Kumbalangi.



Origin of name Kumbalangi

Now a day the study and thought based on the subject origin of the names related to every place in Kerala are very active. The famous scholar Mr. V V K Valeth used to research by travelling and visiting places has written a book called Kochiyile sthalanamangal (Place names in Kochi) in the year 1941. The Kerala Sahitya Academy has published another book called Keralathile sthalanamangal (Place names in Kerala). In this subject, his work is a valuable presentation.

According to Mr. Valeth, the name Kumbalangi is well connected with its origin. Kumbalam and Kumbalangi were important islands located very close to the sea. Many authorized books tell that the land of Kumbalangi is formed or created by the sea. Port was very near and the backwater Vembanadu Lake was connected to sea. Across to Kumbalam, the sea and the mud and sand deposit from Vembanadu Lake created Kumbalangi. Across to Kumbalam in Malayalam means Kumbalam vilangi. According to Mr. V V K Valeth he has stated that as time went on the name Kumbalam vilangi got shortened to Kumbalangi.

In the olden days, salt was prepared from seawater on the seashore. The salt-making seashore area was called Alam. Tanjore in Tamilnadu had a salt farm area. The name of that place was peralam. The place Pachalam in Cochin Corporation has a similar name. In the 2nd century AD, at the time of Ptolemy it is stated that the seashore was at Pachalam. It can be believed that salt was being made at the place Kumbalam also surrounded by the backwater Vembanadu Lake. As found in the Kumbalam settlement register some land property bears names such as Padanna Nilam in survey 71/5, Uppukattathara in survey 91/7 give emphasis to prove the belief.

It is said that the island Kumbalam, Kumbalangi and Perumbalam etc originated due to the return back of sea from east to west and due to the deposit of mud and soil flown through Vembanadu Lake. Kumbalangi village locates at the south west of Kumbalam. It is a thickly populated village among the 9 villages of the smallest taluk in Kochi.

Village tourism was not aggressively promoted in Kerala. As a new concept in the year 2003 Kumbalangi model tourism was developed under the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Good connectivity, homestay options, and a picturesque setting make the village an ideal gateway destination for travelers' passion to discover something simple and new.





Author

Reshma Mary Suresh

ILLIKKAL KALLU

THE MYSTIC MONOLITH IN KOTTAYAM

Two years back I and my friends planned a trip to a place nearby Illikal Kallu which is located near Kottayam district. Once in a year we go for a trip to any nearby place to cut ourselves from the tiring city life and to relax our mind and body. This time we thought to bring a little adventure, with which we could refresh our soul and mind. It was just a one day trip. Well, Illikal Kalu in Kottayam, which is a nearby district of Ernakulam could be the perfect spot for us. Location-wise, Illikal Kallu is located in a sloping area found 10 km from Erattupetta and 32 km from Thodupuzha. Many tourists from different parts of Kerala and different parts of the county visit this place because of its scenic beauty. The adventurous nature of the spot due to its trekking possibilities draw the attention of young crowd as well as adrenaline junkies. The spot is located at 4000 ft. above the sea-level and the glorious views one could see there are noteworthy.

We started our journey from Kochi at 5 a.m. We reached there by 7.30 a.m. and we directly went to a resort called Healthacation. It is an amazing place where we relax and it is an eco-friendly place. Their main aim is to enjoy, learn, and know what it is to be a part of farming activities. At Healthacation, they endeavor to bring the child in you back to life they encourage you to play your childhood games and walk down the memory lane.

After reaching there we freshened up and started visiting places. One of the major features of this site is the ascendance of the three hills together forming a magnificent colossal structure. One of these hills called umbrella rock is extensively popular due to the friction and other natural occurrences over years that have given it a shape of an umbrella. Other hills have unconventional shapes too even though they are not yet attributed to the shape of the specific known object

Still, some people call the second hill a hunch-back rock as you can see a convex edge to the rock. Besides, in the same location, you will also come across an extension which looks like a bridge but does not serve the purpose. It opens itself into the deep valley hence receiving the name Narkappalam which means scaffold to damnation. Besides, the trekking zones, any number of small water bodies including small streams and intermediate waterfalls are pleasant to the eyes. After all this beautiful sightseeing we went back to Kochi. It was just a small trip but it is a memorable trip.

Attractions of Illikkal Kallu

Even while Illikkal Kallu is a tourist attraction in and of itself as a stunning scenic point and an adventurous location, there are many more attractions around that make the spot even more appealing to visitors. There is no limit for enjoyment in case you want to move to another destination immediately. There are multiple attractions to entertain you. Ilaveezhaponjira is probably is the closest beautiful tourist location near Illikal Kallu as it is only 12 KM away. Thangal Para, only 32 kilometres from Illikkal Kallu, is another lovely spot. Kattikayam Waterfalls is stunning. This magnificent waterfall will captivate your attention and deliver a relaxing experience. This is a must-see attraction for everyone visiting Illikkal Kallu. Parunthumpara, 72 kilometres from Illikal Kallu, is another tourist attraction not to be missed on your travels. Vagamon Meadows is about 40 kilometres away from this magnificent location and is a popular tourist destination.

The Marmala Waterfalls, located 11 kilometres from Illickal Kallu, and the Naadukani View Point, located 20 kilometres from Illickal Kallu, are both frequently visited by visitors and are highly favoured by all due to their natural beauty.

The lush greenery, hilly valleys, and majestic hills around are true pleasantries to anyone's eyes. Ramakalmedu which is a very popular attraction situated in the Idukki district is not that far away from Illikkal Kallu. You only need to drive 104kms from Illikkal Kallu to reach there. The journey to the destination is breathtaking.

Best Time to Visit Illikkal Kallu

This is a year-round tourist destination. The greatest time to visit is between October and February, when you will be greeted by a thick morning mist and a brisk breeze. However, if you prefer a cooler climate in the summer, you can visit this location between March and May. Be that it may, from June to September, just like the rest of Kerala, this place also experiences a monsoon climate and there will be rain. Illikkal Kallu is every man's ideal weekend adventure place to get away from the everyday chaos of life. This place offers the best sunsets and sunrise views anyone can imagine. Besides, the morning mist and twilights in this area are extremely beautiful.

Things to do in Illikkal Kallu

Situated in Moonnilavu Village, Illikkal Kallu is one of the highest peaks in the vicinity. Illikkal Kallu's beauty and landscape are similar to those of Kodaikanal's pillar rocks, however only half of the original rock remains, as the other half has fallen off. A list of activities to do in Illikkal Kallu is provided below.

Visit Kattikayam Waterfalls, which is located 2 kilometers away from Illikkal Kallu. The best time to visit this enchanting waterfall is in the monsoon when it cascades in all vigor and splendor. If you visit this location, be cautious of the slick rocks. Barren Hills, with its extensive areas of beautiful green meadows, is a popular tourist destination. When you are there, do not miss out on the sunset.

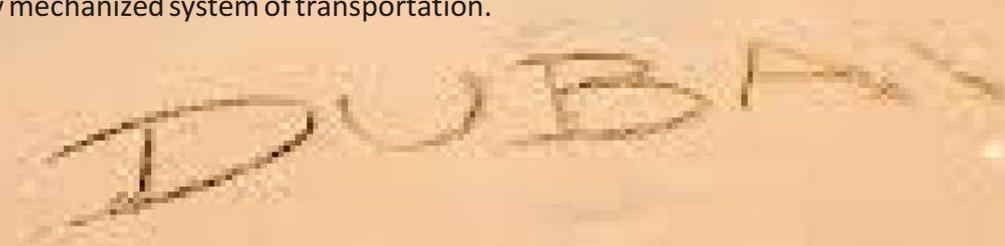


CITY OF GOLD DUBAI



Author
Asst. Prof. Arya M S

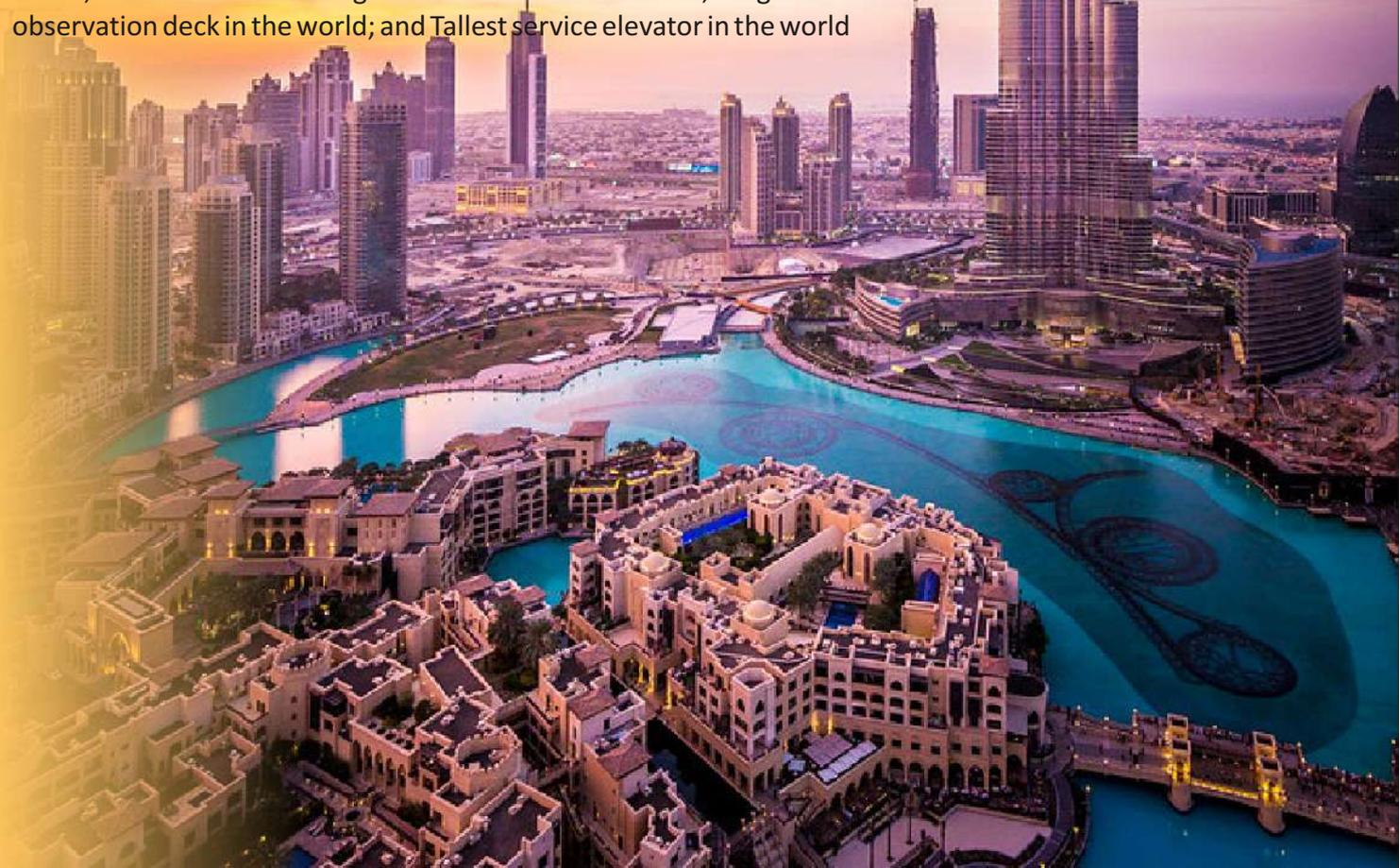
As I know up to about 1956 gulf countries were more desert areas. People of those countries were depending on fishing and animal husbandry for their livelihood. After Gulf countries began to develop by the invention of petroleum. Workers from all over the world especially Indians took part in the development of the Gulf countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, etc because of the absence of educated and skilled natives. As to my Knowledge United Arab Emirates had a fast development UAE is a union of 7 vivid Emirates such as Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Umm al-Qaiwain, Fujairah, Ajman, and Ra's al-Khaimah. Dubai stands prominent amongst these Emirates. Its development was so fast and well steered by the Maktoum royal family. Dubai could install all necessary modern amenities and services in the country. They have chosen ultramodern architecture. Even now development is going on. Countless Keralites took part in the awakening of the country. In early yesteryears, people used to travel in "path mary" like small ships. Now the seen have changed gulf countries are well connected to all the world by air and sea with a speedy mechanized system of transportation.



Dubai is the most popular city in the world. The king and the ruling family with their strenuous effort made Dubai topmost in all world standards. They built so many factories, business firms, well-developed transport systems, good roads, and other modern amenities for the upliftment of the country within a short period Dubai became a magnificent world in all walks of life. As a tourist, I was admired when I saw sky-touching tall buildings, finest roads recreation centers, beaches, parks, monuments, etc. The architectural beauty of the building is outstanding overall Dubai is very clean and non-polluting. To maintain this condition they have implemented certain street rules and regulations. Dubai is absolutely a place with amusements and wonders. For a tourist, there are plenty of activities and attractions to explore.

Burj Khalifa

Amongst the tall building Burj Khalifa 828 meters tall tower, 'A Living wonder by Emaar properties dominates in the sky. Most of the famous trade centers found a place in this building. The observation deck of the building will open from 08:30 am to 05:00 pm. From the top of the building, we can feel the panoramic view of Dubai and on special occasions, the tower will light up with colorful lights. Burj khalifa's view can be taken in from two observations decks located on the 124th and 125th floor as well as at the world's highest observation deck on the 148th floor. A traveler can visit the building by paying the entry fee of AED 125 to 340 as per the height of the tower. The structure of the tower is based on an abstraction of the Hymenocallis flower and is essentially three sections arranged around a central core. Viewed from above, it is consistent with the onion-dome design frequently found across a variety of Islamic architecture. In addition to its aesthetic and functional advantages, the spiraling "Y" shaped plan is used to shape the structural core of Burj Khalifa. The wind forces on the tower can be reduced by using this design, as well as it helps to keep the structure simple and foster constructability. Based on the features the building holds the records of the tallest building in the world; Tallest freestanding structure of the world; Highest outdoor observation deck in the world; and Tallest service elevator in the world



Dubai Fountain

At the foot of Burj Khalifa lies the world's tallest performing Dubai fountain with jets and lights choreographed to music. Without an entrance fee, we can watch the amazing performance of the fountain. Normally the fountain will work from 07:00 pm to 11:00 pm. The unique design of the fountain comprising five circles of varying sizes and features powerful water nozzles that shoot water up to impressive heights and two arcs. Over 6,600 WET Superlights and 25 color projectors create a visual spectrum of over 1,000 different water expressions. The fountain performs a different range of songs from classical to contemporary Arabic and world music. sail on a traditional Abra is also provided on the 30 acre Burj lake for the tourist.

Dubai Mall

Very near to the Dubai Fountain lies the famous Dubai Mall is known for luxury and elaborate shopping. Dubai mall is considered the second-largest shopping mall in the world based on total area. It covers over 12 million square feet. Some of the special attractions of the mall are the largest indoor aquarium, an ice rink, haunted house, rainforest café, fossil of large long-necked dinosaur, VR Park which is 76000 sq ft amusement park features a wide variety of rides and games.

A massive 150 million-year-old dinosaur skeleton was displayed at The Dubai Mall's Grand Atrium. The aquarium is located at the ground level "2" of the Dubai Mall. If you enter the underwater zoo by paying the entry fee we can walk through the aquarium tunnels to see marine animals such as sharks, tortoises, rays, and various kinds of large sea fishes, etc.

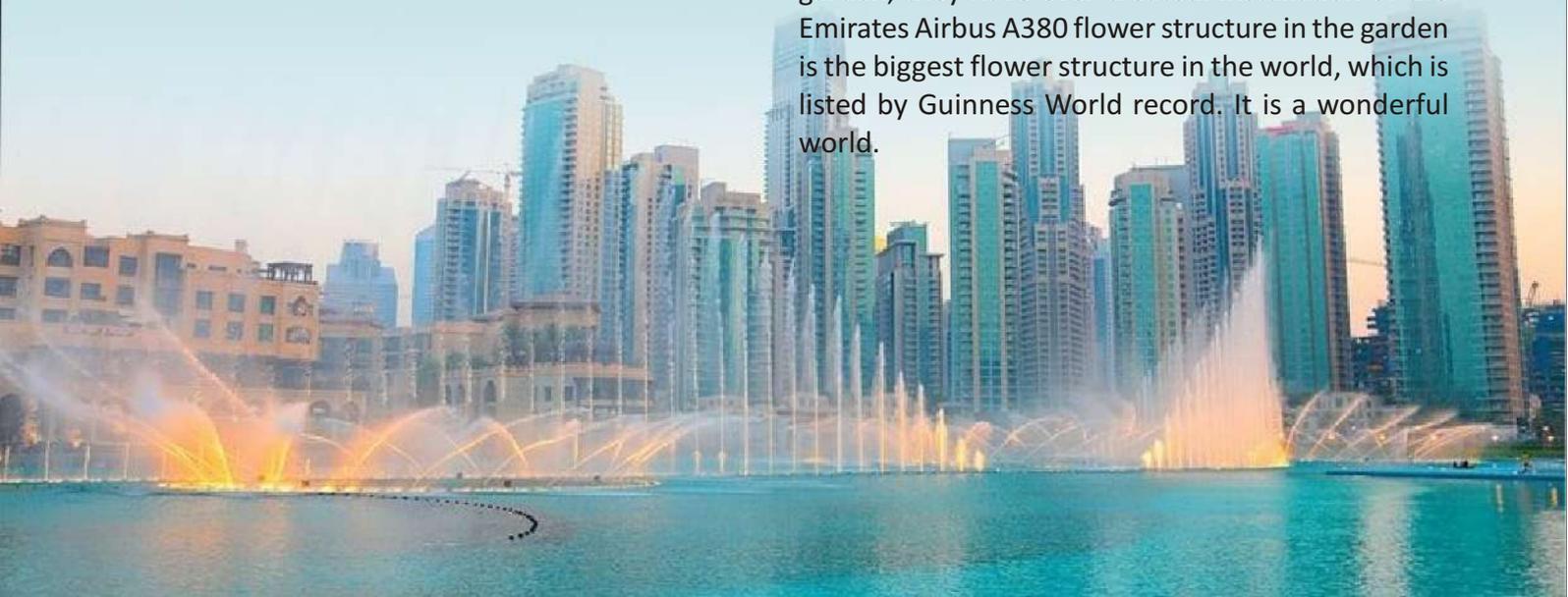
Hotel Burj AL-Arab-Jumaira Beach

Dubai has so many fine beaches. At Jumeirah beach there are so many hotels and restaurants are located. Tourists from all over the world visit this place. Especially Europeans engage in sunbathing and other water-based sports activities on the shore. It is in Jumairah is the world's tallest hotel Burj-AL-Arab(320-meter height) standing on its artificial island on Dubai coastline the hotel is designed to resemble a billowing dhow sail. The interior of the building is lit up by colored lighting at night.

One of the most expensive hotels in the world is considered Dubai's most iconic hotel. The underwater AL-Mahana restaurant is made up of glass panels from floor to ceiling. The dining room wall allows viewing the sea life while eating. The Hotel is located 280m off the shore of Dubai and was built on a man-made island. Seventeen types of pillows are available to the guest on the pillow menu to get a blissful night. To embellish the hotel interior, around 1,790sqm of 24-carat gold leaf was used.

Miracle Garden

The sight of the miracle garden is amazing. Everywhere it is full of greenery and various colors of flowers are designed to create big shapes of animals, birds, buildings, etc. This largest natural flower garden is declared the world's largest vertical garden. It is truly a miracle to have a flourishing garden full of thousands of flowers blooming in a desert and you have to be there to believe this wonder. There are walkways decorated with flowering plants to move to the various parts of the garden. All the arrangements in the garden are incredibly beautiful. Every flower arrangements are unique and certainly a treat to the senses. In the garden, they have ever created. Installation of the Emirates Airbus A380 flower structure in the garden is the biggest flower structure in the world, which is listed by Guinness World record. It is a wonderful world.



Global Village

It is the most popular tourist attraction in Dubai. Countries like Japan, USA, Pakistan, Thailand, South Africa, Iran, India, etc will take part in this fair. Over 25 pavilions are set up around October to April where there are people from different countries showcasing local products. Each Pavillion is built to resemble each countries culture. Over thousands of shopping outlets to explore, it is the perfect opportunity to fill your bags with authentic buys from around the world. Carnival at the Global village is a thrilling experience with over 30 exhilarating rides. There are funfair rides, music concerts, dance items, magical shows comedy shows which can be enjoyed by both adults and kids. Global Village has a line-up of cultural and entertainment shows each season. and the country pavilions hosting live shows, and roaming street performers to entertain the visitors. Global Village stays faithful to its international theme by showcasing the culinary preparation best the world has got to provide.

Al Seef

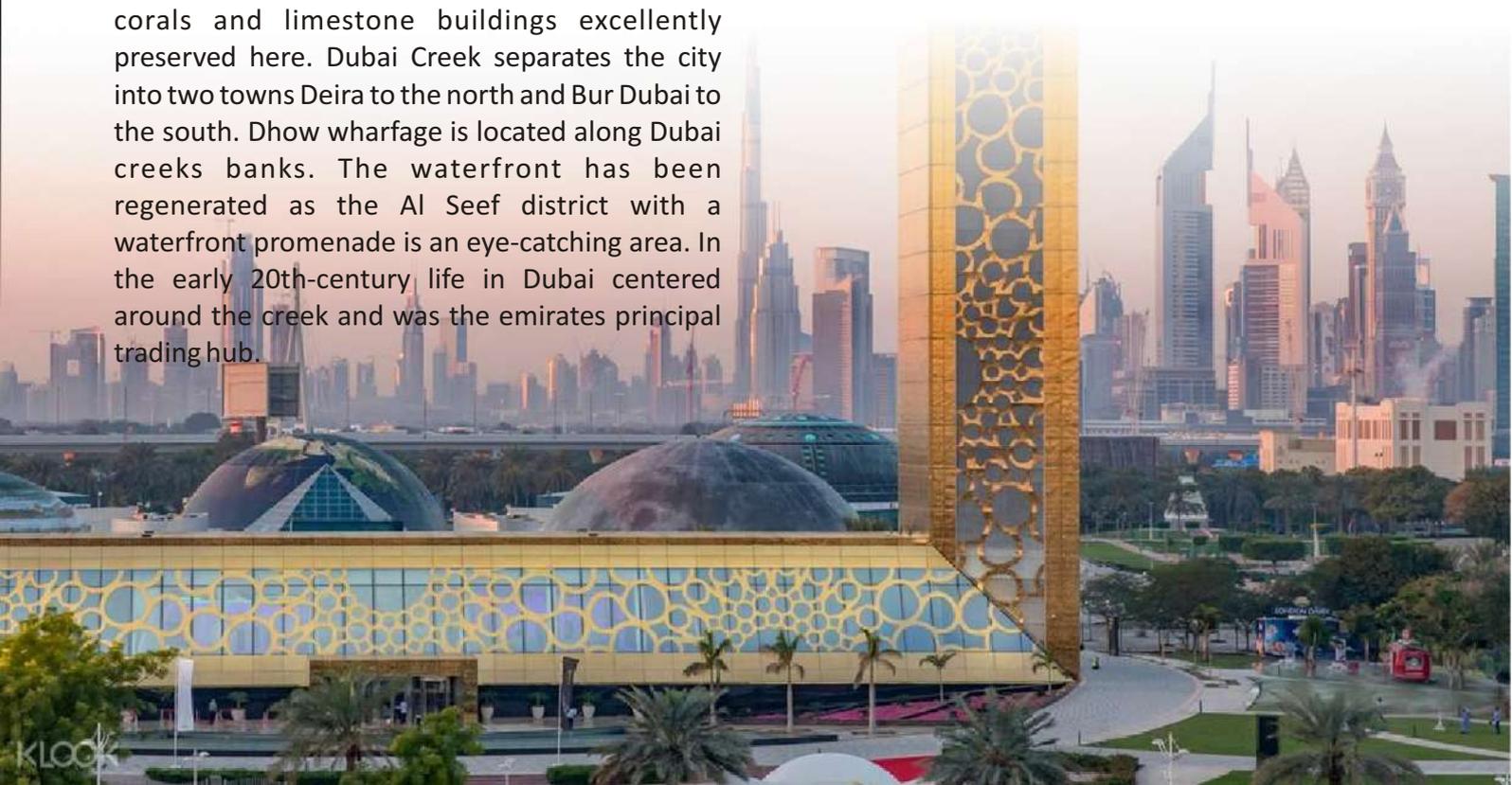
It is an area of Dubai Steeped in history with a huge amount of Emirati culture. In the later 19th, century-old Dubai was the home of wealthy "Persian" merchants who dealt mainly in pearls and textiles and were lured to Dubai became of the tax-free trading and oceans to Dubai Creek. Old Dubai occupies the eastern portion of Bur Dubai along the creek. There are so many old corals and limestone buildings excellently preserved here. Dubai Creek separates the city into two towns Deira to the north and Bur Dubai to the south. Dhow wharfage is located along Dubai creeks banks. The waterfront has been regenerated as the Al Seef district with a waterfront promenade is an eye-catching area. In the early 20th-century life in Dubai centered around the creek and was the emirates principal trading hub.

Dubai Frame

It is one of the city's most famous attractions for visitors much likes Dubai's iconic Burj Khalifa and Burj Al-Arab. The building's landmark location is in Zabeel park which provides sweeping panoramic views of the city. This arch-like frame is one of Dubai's latest sights with 150-meter height and 93 meters wide. Inside a series of galleries with you through the history and explore Emirate's heritage before you travel up to the sky desk, there are fantastic panoramas of both old and new Dubai to be snapped on the viewing platforms. The viewing platform is made up of toughened glass from where we can see the ground floor far below which creates a little fear. The surroundings on the wayside and in the park are full of flowering plants a fantastic color display even if it is a deserted land the healthy growth of plants and bloomed flowers wondered me.

Sheik Mohammed AL-Makhtourn House

The Sheik Mohammed house is a spatially vast area that is a great example of the early 20th-century style of architecture, with many wings both open and closed and quite a few air towers. Sheik Mohammed Al-Makhtourn was the ruler of Dubai from 1921 to 1958 and grandfather of the current ruler. His former residence has been rebuilt and restored as a museum is the finest example of Arabian culture. In this beautiful building, 30 rooms are built around a central courtyard with wind tower details on top. Historical photographs and documents are displayed there.



Hotel Atlantis

Located on Dubai's Palm Jumeirah island, which is a palm tree-shaped artificial island. The 5-star category Atlantis offers stunning views of the Arabian Gulf. It provides an underwater Aquarium and complimentary access to the Aquaventure park and the lost chamber Aquarium. We can reach Atlantis in a monorail from the mainland is a short journey.

Palm Jumeirah is a manmade offshore island in Dubai. It is the site of private residences and hotels. In an aerial view, it resembles, a stylish palm tree within a circle. Palm Jumeirah was built in the 21st century with the financial aid achieved from the income from petroleum. The main seashores of palm Jumeirah are classified in the manner Trunk, Fronds, Spin, Crescent, etc.

The broad trunk is connected to the mainland by a bridge. It serves as the entrance to the development. Another bridge connects the trunk to the spine. There is a narrow exit from which 17 fronds protrude. The crescent is a breakwater that nearly surrounds the other sectors and is divided into three sections to facilitate the circulation of seawater. There are apartments, retail facilities, and few hotels are situated in the trunk. Closely arranged villas line the long fronds. Most of the hotels and resorts are located in the crescent.

Desert Safari

Desert safari is another best experience in Dubai. Simply we can go for a camel ride to watch the sunset from the desert or night camp with traditional dance, food, and a campfire will be there. Dubai's popular desert safari has been ranked the world's top tourism experience.

Skydiving

If any visitor in Dubai is willing to spend money can enjoy various kinds of sports which include skydiving. It is the sport of Jumping from the high point of an aircraft and descending by way of the parachute. Dubai has a world-class reputation in skydiving. Dubai hosted its first international parachuting champion through skydive Dubai. Thus became the destination for skydivers of all skill levels year-round. Dubai is the exact place to go for the aerial views that only skydiving can deliver. For those who seek thrills take in the scenic skyline of Dubai from birds-eye-view then plunge below.

Dubai Marina

It is located along the coast between the districts of Jebel Ali and Al Sufouk next to the Palm Jumeirah and Dubai media city. It is a highly urbanized district in the southwest part of Dubai. Three kilometers long dense harbour have full of variety of yacht different in types and sizes. It is one of the world's artificial Marina. Dubai Marina district is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Dubai. It is an enlight prestigious place to live.

A large part of Dubai Marina is the famous residential area called the Jumeira Beach Residence(JBR) and it is the longest residential complex in the world covering an area of 2 square kilometers. Throughout the entire length, a large part of it extends to the beach, vibrant shopping and entertainment area built by Meeras. The beach offers a wide variety of dining options, cafeterias, bars as well as shopping and leisure destinations.

Dubai is absolutely a land of wonders with amusements, activities, innovations, and attractions. It is one of the fastest-growing business centers in the world. The experience as a traveler in Dubai is never-ending and will wonder each and everybody.





OOTY

QUEEN OF HILL STATIONS



Author
Nevin Poduthas

The hills and mountains make us feel close to the sky above us and fill us with joy. Ooty is the "queen of hill stations" and a place to be adored and enjoyed.

"QUEEN OF HILL STATIONS", this how Ooty is popular all over the world, but for those who visit there, it will change to "QUEEN OF MEMORIES". "Queen of Hill Station" is rich in beautiful climate and extraordinary geographical structure. Botanical garden, Doddabetta peak, Ooty Lake, Tea museum, Rose garden, Pykara waterfalls are the attractions that I have covered in four days. I began the journey to Ooty in January with my plus two friends; it was a school trip.

We planned our journey to Ooty on second week of January. It was a different feeling for all of us to be in the school compound at 11 pm. All our faces were glowing because of the happiness and excitement we had. Around 200 students were there, and the only thought we had in our mind was the trip to Ooty, with our most loved ones. We started our journey at 11.30 pm. From each and every bus, I could hear huge screams out of happiness. It was an unforgettable moment.

Day 01

The next morning by around 10 am we arrived at Ooty. It was a warm and beautiful sunny day. There we managed to get a good resort and they allotted rooms for everyone. After fresh up, we proceeded to our first attraction, Botanical garden. There we got to see the beauty of Ooty. The wonderful moments that we got to experience was remarkable. We roamed around to see the beautiful trees and flowers over there and we loved that scenario. The whole area was filled with fresh air and beautiful flowers. The grass bed was another attraction of the site. We sat upon the grass. It took more than 2 hours for us to enjoy the beautiful scenario. It was just wonderful. Just outside, we saw many locals selling "Ooty flower", which is small and dark yellow colored.

Botanical garden

A botanical garden is a government-sponsored endeavour to collect, cultivate, preserve, and display a diverse range of plants identified by their botanical names. It contains different types of plant collections such as cacti and other succulent plants, herb gardens, plants from particular parts of the world, and there are shade houses, greenhouses that preserve the varieties of collections such as tropical plants, alpine plants, or other exotic plants. They offer different types of services for visitors at the botanical garden might include educational displays, tours, book rooms, open-air theatrical, art exhibitions, and musical performances, and other entertainment. The important role of the botanical garden is to maintain the collections of living plants for education, display, conservation, and scientific research, although this will depend on the available resources and the special interests pursued at each particular part of the garden.

The Garden is parted into several sections, cover an area of around 55 hectares, and lie on the lower slopes of Doddabetta peak. The garden has a terraced layout. Now it is maintained by the Horticulture Department of the Tamil Nadu state. The Government Botanical Garden was established in 1848. Its architect was William Graham McIlvor. The Marquis of Tweeddale made the initial layout during the late 1840s. The gardens were charged by a Rs 3 per month amongst the European residents to supply vegetables at a reasonable cost. There are about 1000 species of gardens, including exotic and native plants, shrubs, ferns, trees, herbal and bonsai plants. In the center of the garden lies a fossilized trunk that is 20 million years old. The gardens include flower beds, lotus ponds, flower beds, Italian-style flowers and ferns, and many floral plots and a variety of medicinal plants. The present Botanical Gardens are divided into six distinct parts: the Lower Garden, the New Garden, the Italian Garden, the Conservatory, the Fountain Terrace, and the Nurseries.

The Flower Show is important event being conducted here. In 1980, the government took over the flower show from the Nilgiris Agri-Horticultural Society. The Flower Show attracts 150,000 tourists each year from around the world. The flower show takes place over two days. The opening of the exhibition takes place on the first and second day; Prizes will be distributed to the winners of various competitions held in connection with the Flower Show. The primary highlights of the exhibition days include floral decorations, Indian and Japanese floral arrangements, vegetable carvings, flower rangoli, and bonsai.

The trunk of the fossil tree on display in the garden is 20 million years old. The trees carried by the rivers and deposited in the inland lakes replaced the woody material with silica and the trunks of the fossil trees.



Ooty Lake

Ooty Lake, also known as the Ooty Boat House, is located about 1 km from the Ooty bus stand. It covers an area of 65 acres. The boathouse by the lake offers boating facilities to the tourists. Ooty Lake is an artificial lake built by John Sullivan in 1824. The lake emptied three times when it broke its bund. The lake was originally intended to be used for fishing with ferries used to cross the lake. It has gradually shrunk from the actual size of the existing bus stand to the racecourse and lake park. The lake was acquired by the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation in 1973 on behalf of the Department of Tourism for providing boating facilities as a tourist attraction. The lake is surrounded by eucalyptus groves and a railway line runs along the shore. During the summer months of May, boat races and boat races are organized.

Nilgiri Mountain Railway The Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR) is a railway in Tamil Nadu, India, built by the British in 1908. Railways rely on their steam locomotives. Locals and visitors spearheaded a campaign to return to this category of steam engines. In July 2005, the Nilgiri Mountain Railway was added by UNESCO as an extension to the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway World Heritage Site. This place was later known as the Mountain Railways of India. In 1854, it was planned to build a mountain railway from Mettupalayam to the Nilgiris. However, it took 45 years for those who decided to cut the bureaucratic red tape and complete construction. The line was completed in June 1899 and opened to traffic. It was first operated by the Madras Railway under an agreement with the government. The Madras Railway Company operated the railway line for a long time until the acquisition of the South Indian Railway Company.

By the evening, we returned back to our rooms. The dinner night was the most unforgettable night that I have ever experienced. The sky was filled with shining stars like blackboard with many white dots. The campfire was also set up there. On that night we got the nicest and the most beautiful night in our whole life.

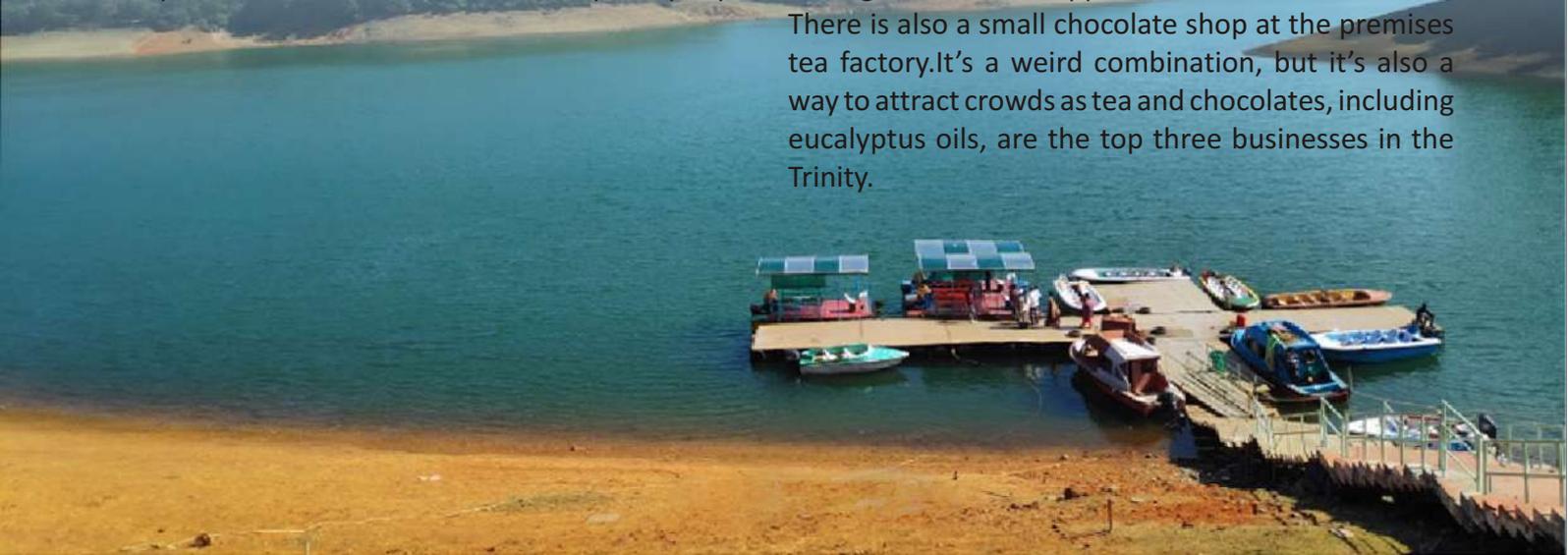
Day 02

Our second day started with a glorious morning. The first destination visit for the day was at the tea museum where we saw how the tea powder is produced using different methods. There was also a shop inside the tea factory that sells different types of tea powders. There we saw many different types of tea powders. It took us nearly 2 hours to completely visit the whole factory. Tea Museum

Known as the Tea Tea Farm, it offers a wonderful opportunity for people to visit this place where tea is processed, packed, and sold to everyone. It all happens in a tea factory in Ooty. The natural oils of eucalyptus trees, cloves, lemongrass, camphor, and geranium are also famous in the oil extraction industry for their use in various balm massage treatments.

The tea factory is a two-story building. It serves as a tea museum on the ground floor, and the entrance on the second floor leads you to a large hall where you can see tea leaf dryers. The hall is lined with large billboards revealing the history of tea making and the art of making this tea all over India. You will notice the tea leaves being cut and scattered in the dryers and then moved to the first floor to be cut, bent, and rolled into the tea we see. The word 'CTC tea' literally derives from these three words' brand name, which means cut, twist, and roll. On the first floor of the Ooty Tea Factory, you'll find a chain of five CTC high-speed stainless steel roller machines cutting, twisting, and curling the tea leaf in opposite directions.

There is also a small chocolate shop at the premises tea factory. It's a weird combination, but it's also a way to attract crowds as tea and chocolates, including eucalyptus oils, are the top three businesses in the Trinity.



Doddabetta

After visiting the tea factory, we again returned to our rooms for lunch. Our next destination was Doddabetta, the highest peak. It was a breathtaking scene. Our bus didn't get to the peak; there were local jeeps to reach there. The highest mountain in the Nilgiris is 2,637 m (8,652 ft.). There is a reserved forest area around the peak. It is located 9 km from Ooty on the Ooty-Kotagiri Road in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu, India. It is the fourth highest peak in South India after Anamudi, Mannamalai, and Meesapulimala. The area around Doddabetta is mostly forested. The shoals cover the hollows of its slopes. Slightly stunted, rhododendron trees, dense subtropical shrubs, flowering sub-alpine shrubs, and plants common, very close to the peak. There is an observatory at the top of Doddabetta with two binoculars for the public. Doddabetta has a very different scene, there we saw the whole world from such height. We loved the view. It's a very calm environment, perfect for nature lovers.

After 2 hours we returned from the peak to main roads in the local jeep, it was a little bit scary too. And we reached the rooms and packed our bags to return back home. Once we got into the bus, we realized that we are again going back to our usual life. But the moments that we spent in the "QUEEN OF HILL STATIONS" is remarkable and unforgettable in our whole life.

Other attractions in Ooty

Rose Garden

Government Rose Garden (formerly known as Jayalalithaa Rose Garden, Centenary Rose Park, NutrandRajaPoonka) is located at an elevation of 2200 m on the slopes of Elk Hill in Vijayanagar, the town of Ooty in Tamil Nadu,

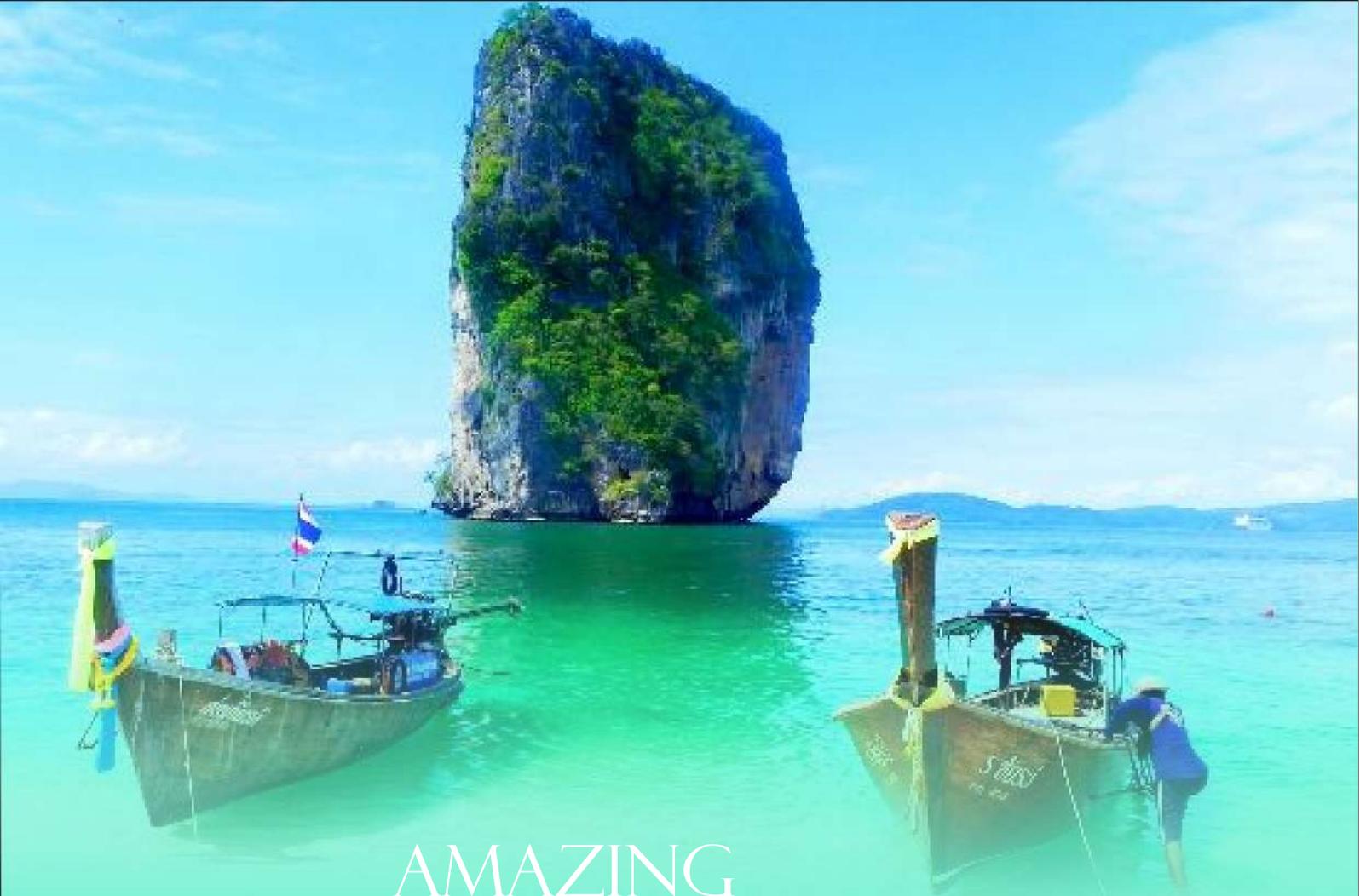
India. Ooty has a unique tropical mountain climate; Therefore, the climate is ideal for growing roses in the garden. The Government Rose Garden in the heart of Ooty is one of the largest rose gardens in India. The beautiful garden is spread over 10 acres with a collection of the largest roses in the country, including many unique varieties such as miniature roses, hybrid tea roses, floribunda, ramblers, black and green roses. The Rose Garden is not only a delight to the eyes and the senses, but a must-visit for anyone interested in gardening. On the slopes of the garden is the Nila Madam, an observation platform. From the Nila Madam, tourists can see the entire Rose Garden. There is also a statue of an angel among the roses in the garden.

Pykara waterfalls

Paikara is a river located at a distance of 19 km from Ooty in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The river Paikara is considered very sacred by the gardeners. It rises at Mukurti's top, flows north, and then turns west when it reaches the plateau's edge. The river flows through the Murkurti, Paikara, and Glenmorgan dams, and is part of a major hydropower project. The waterfall is located at a distance of about 6 km from the bridge on the main road. There is a forest rest house in Paikara. A boathouse on the Paikara Reservoir attracts a lot of tourists. Paikara has well-protected and fenced shoals, toda habitats, large grasslands, and good wildlife habitat.

Ooty is a place to strengthen your relationship with Mother Nature. From these little details, you will know that Ooty is a place to visit and a place where many families visit. This visit is economical, enjoyable, and gives you a respite from your busy life. Enjoy the cosines and comfort of nature. This will be a trip to remember.





AMAZING THAILAND



Author
Asst. Prof. Ayana Sunil

It is said that “wherever you go becomes a part of you somehow”. And, Thailand has always been a great influence ever since the visit. During the first year of my post-graduation in 2019, as part of the curriculum, we had to undertake an international tour. So, the 14 of us along with our faculty decided to visit the most affordable international destination we could visit from India; i.e., Thailand- The Land of Smiles.

Thailand, formally known as the Kingdom of Thailand, is a Southeast Asian country bordering the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand. Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia are its neighbours. Almost anything can be found here: a dense forest as green as it gets, crystal blue waters that feel more like a warm bath than a swim in the ocean, a gorgeous city, and food to tempt your taste buds.

We started our journey on 18th of March, 2019 from Thiruvananthapuram- the Capital city of Kerala. We travelled to Ernakulam by Kerala Express. We reached there by the evening. Then we transferred to Aluva using Kochi Metro. There, we had our dinner and then we reached Cochin International Airport by an auto rickshaw. Our flight, Thai AirAsia departed at 12:45 am.

After around five and a half hour journey, we arrived at Don Mueang International Airport, Bangkok early in the morning at 06:15 am on 19th of March. We already had our mind filled with the magical colours of thai sunrise from up above the clouds. Once we came out of the airport after the arrival procedures, we met our tour guide and then we started our journey towards Pattaya in our tour bus. Enroute, we had our breakfast. Then we headed over to the first destination of our trip- Sriracha Tiger Zoo.

Sriracha Tiger Zoo is situated on the outskirts of Pattaya. The zoo claims to have the world's greatest tiger and crocodile populations, with 2000 tigers and 10,000 crocodiles. There we had a once in a lifetime opportunity to touch and take pictures alongside a tiger and its cubs, and crocodiles. Apart from tigers and crocodiles, there were elephants, camels, spotted deers, donkeys, rabbits and other animals. We also had the opportunity to witness tiger show and crocodile show which was such a mind-blowing experience. After lunch, we checked in to Mike Garden Resort, our site of accommodation for the next two days.

After fresh-up, we headed over to visit Art In Paradise- the first and only one illusion art museum. The art gallery consists of three-dimensional paintings that are interactive, as well as funny. We had to install their application on our mobile phones and then once we point the device at the paintings, we could see the paintings come alive. The art gallery has used the technology of augmented reality to the fullest. Through clever use of shading and borders, artists have painted directly on to walls to create stunning images that trick our eyes into thinking animals are smashing through walls, friends are balancing over raging waterfalls and polar bears are stealing a sip of our coconut. After the mind-blowing experience in the wonderland, we headed over to an Indian restaurant for dinner.

Then we decided to visit Walking Street, which is very famous, primarily for its nightlife. It is Thailand's largest and busiest nightlife destination. It is effectively a part of Pattaya Beach Road. Almost every building along its length is a nightclub, massage parlor, go-go bar, beer bar or restaurant. The most interesting thing we could find there was our Indian flag flying high on top of some buildings and also the Bollywood songs being played out so loud in many of the restaurants, which clearly stated the intensity of Indian influence in the Thailand. After an hour-long walk we wrapped up for the day and headed back to our accommodation in a Tuk Tuk, which is similar to an auto-rickshaw we have in India.

On the second day, after breakfast, we started our journey towards Coral Island, also known as Koh Larn, where one can experience an adrenaline rush with the water sport activities being offered there. At first, we reached Pattaya beach by bus. There, one of the local photographers took a picture of our whole group, as well as individual pictures. Then we headed over to the little piece of paradise in a speed boat which took 45 minutes for a distance of 7 kms. The white-sand beaches, the warm turquoise seas, and the lush green islands all around gave a real visual treat to all of us which filled our mind and soul with peace and ultimate joy. We decided to go for parasailing and an underwater walk. The 15 minutes long parasailing made us feel like we got wings to fly up above the world. They also made us take a dip in the middle of the sea. During the underwater walk, we got the opportunity to spend around 20-30 minutes walking on the ocean bed, exploring marine life differently.



An oxygen mask with a helmet-like thing was put on and we were asked to go down into the seawater. We also got an opportunity to feed the beautiful fishes with bread pieces. There were also numerous other water activities being offered there, but due to money and time constraints, we limited it with two activities and then we went to spend some quality time together by swimming and playing in the sea. The depth of the area allowed was around 5-6 ft to prevent drowning. Also, I felt the seawater to be much saltier than the beaches we have in India, as the salty water went all into my mouth and nose as we were busy living the moment. By afternoon, we reached back to the Pattaya beach, and there we received our pictures framed as souvenirs which were taken just before we took our speedboat to the island. Then, we headed over to an Indian restaurant for lunch, and then we went back to our hotel for a fresh-up.

By evening, we visited the Pattaya Park Tower, which is the highest seaside tower with revolving restaurants on 52nd, 53rd and 54th floors. On the 55th floor, there is an observation deck that gives a stunning view of the Pattaya beach as well as the city, and there we had witnessed one of the most beautiful sunsets we have ever got to see. The park tower also offers tower jump from a height of 550 ft. Then, we visited the Pattaya Floating Market. It is the largest freshwater pond in the East of Thailand where one can paddle through the pond to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the place, where there are shops on both sides entirely made of teak wood. Since we reached the floating market after sunset, it was a visual treat to witness the whole place lit. There we found shops that sell their traditional outfits, souvenir shops and even shops that sell fresh ice creams and other local foods. But most of the shops were closed since we were a little late to reach there. Then we headed over to an Indian restaurant for dinner and then back to our hotel.

On the third day of our trip, after breakfast, we packed our bags and checked out of the hotel. We started our journey towards Bangkok, the capital and most populous city of Thailand, often known for its ornate shrines and vibrant street life. After around a journey of 2 hours, we reached the first attraction of Bangkok- Safari World and Marine Park. The huge park was divided into 2 areas, a drive-through Safari Park and a Marine Park. At first, we entered the Marine Park, from where we had our buffet lunch for the day with a large variety of dishes. After lunch, our tour guide divided us into groups of 3 and handed over a brochure which indicated the list of shows and their timings. And then we were left to explore the Marine Park on our own. A large number of game stalls were set up, where we spent a good amount of Thai Bahts' but still, we couldn't win any of those games. There were a lot of bird and animal shows, but since few of them were arranged at the same time, we had to choose a few among them. I and a few of my friends went to the Orangutan Show, Birds Show, and the Dolphin Show. Apart from the shows, we also got the opportunity to see and feed a variety of birds, sea lions, and tigers. After spending some quality time at the Marine Park, we got into our bus and headed over to the Safari World. On a kilometer drive through African safari-like wilderness, the Safari drive-through offered us a chance to view from close by wild animals from Africa and Asia like rhino, deer, bear, zebra, giraffe and many kinds of tropical birds in a natural-like habitat. The animals not being caged, attracted us the most. After Safari World and Marine Park, we visited Baiyoke Sky Hotel- Thailand's tallest and Bangkok's most scenic hotel. Baiyoke Sky Hotel is an 88-story building with panoramic views of Bangkok, a spinning roof deck, an observation deck, and seven dining options.



Then we spent some quality time shopping for some souvenirs for our family and friends along with the street just opposite the Indra Mall; one of the cheapest shopping malls in Bangkok. We had our dinner on the 47th floor of Baiyoke Suite Hotel, which was one luxurious experience. After dinner, we headed over to the Howard Square Boutique Hotel, for the overnight accommodation in Bangkok.

On the fourth and the final day of the trip, after breakfast, we checked out of the Howard Square Boutique Hotel. Then we headed for the city tour of Bangkok, which included the Golden Buddha Temple, Gems Gallery, and Intra Mall. At first, we visited the Golden Buddha Temple, also known as Wat Traimit. The temple had a calm and spiritual ambiance and is known for housing a 5.5-tonne statue of a seated Buddha. And then we headed over to the Gems Gallery. There we got an opportunity to witness the making and sales of various precious gems. It had hundreds of items and dozens of products made of different materials and stones. Gems Jewellery Bangkok is not only a jewelry factory but also a great place to buy authentic souvenirs such as teak woodwork, Thai silk, products from snakes and crocodile leather, aromatic products, and many more. Then we had our lunch from an Indian restaurant named India Gate in the Indra Mall. Post lunch, we had some time for shopping. By the evening we traveled to Don Mueang International Airport to catch our flight back to Cochin. Our flight, Thai AirAsia departed from Bangkok at 9:55 pm and we reached Cochin by 12:15 am on the 23rd of March. It marked the end of our four-day trip and we headed back to our homes with a bag full of souvenirs and a heart full of beautiful memories which each one of us would cherish a lifetime.



MUNNAR

THE KASHMIR OF SOUTH INDIA



Author
Shania

Munnar is a quaint town and an idyllic hill station located in the Western Ghats of Kerala. Set at an altitude of 6000 ft in the district of Idukki, Munnar used to be the summer resort of the British rulers during colonial times. It is known for its green belt of lush forests and unending expanse of tea estates and is also home to some of the endangered species of animals like Neelakurinji and Nilgiri Tahr. It is known to be one of the most sought-after tourist destinations in South India due to its pristine valleys, mountains and exotic varieties of flora and fauna.

Munnar is a town and beautiful hill station in the Idukki district of Kerala. Roads from Kerala to Munnar are comfortable and tree-shaded, where on your way to Munnar you will experience beautiful sightseeing, exotic waterfalls, beautiful valleys, green rolling hills, various shades of green, emerald tea plantations, organic farms, and breathtaking scenes the more you reach the higher altitude.

Every year, we used to visit famous destinations in our Country. This year, we planned a long trip to the mind-blowing haven of peace and yet another pride of God's Own Country, Kerala. We wanted to explore the place and enjoy its unfolded splendor as a part of our family recreation.

We planned the trip with our uncle's family so that we can enjoy ourselves together. It was a sunny day when we started from our home town but as we moved towards Munnar we felt very pleasant and cool. After driving on nearly arrow-straight highways, the sight of the twisty mountain roads with hardly any traffic fuelled our enthusiasm for driving. After pushing our cars through several rolling bends we met a sight so spectacular that we had to stop.

The pristine mountain air with its distinctive smell, the cool surroundings which were nearly 10° cooler than the plains, the mist descending into the valley.

On our way, we enjoyed the Flora and Fauna, valleys, hills, and waterfalls. The best thing about it are the Tea Gardens everywhere. We really loved walking along the Tea Gardens and took a lot of photos there. The waterfalls were endless and we enjoyed the scenery over there. A cute little monkey decided to photobomb and pose for a picture along with me as well!

One of the adventurous experiences for us was at the Eravikulam National Park. At this National Park, we saw an animal that is about to extinct Nilgiri Tahr. This endangered species of a mountain goat is nearing extinction and the present population is about 2000 only, the majority of which are found only here. The park covers a neighborhood of 97 sq.km. and is split into 3 zones core, buffer, and Rajamalai. Vehicles reach up to the Rajamalai region from there we can only trek through the forested grassland. In the core area, visitors were not allowed. Rajamala Park is composed of beautiful meadows and gorgeous valleys situated just about 12 km from Munnar town. It is famous for its flower Neelakurinji, which blooms once in 12 years.

Echo point Munnar is one among the must-see attractions in Munnar anytime around the year. The spellbinding place gets its name from the natural echo development that happens within the place. The distinctiveness of this place lies within the incontrovertible fact that on shouting, your voice returns reverberates to you with what you yelled. The Eco Point was a thrilling Experience where we had fun screaming our names loudly and hearing it back the same way. Echo Point's scenic gorgeousness consisted of clustered tea plantations, spice and occasional gardens. It is a great spot for trekkers and nature strollers as well.

Munnar is an amazing holiday destination that consists of various attractions. Some of the attractions we missed visiting are:

Pothamedu viewpoint

It is a magnificent viewpoint that will show the tea, coffee, and cardamom plantations of the valley. Also, it is a great trekking and hiking place. For adventure seekers, nature lovers and hikers, Pothamedu may be a place worth visiting. It is known for its scenic environs, which offer a bird's eye view of Munnar and adjoining valleys, soaked within the blanket of greenery. Though the place remains misty most of the time as the atmosphere is obvious, one can catch a glimpse of the Muthirapuzha River and Idukki Arch Dam, which is around 60 km away from Munnar. Pothamedu Viewpoint may be a perfect place for photographers, who can capture the stunning images of this heaven from different angles and obtain some breathtaking pictures.

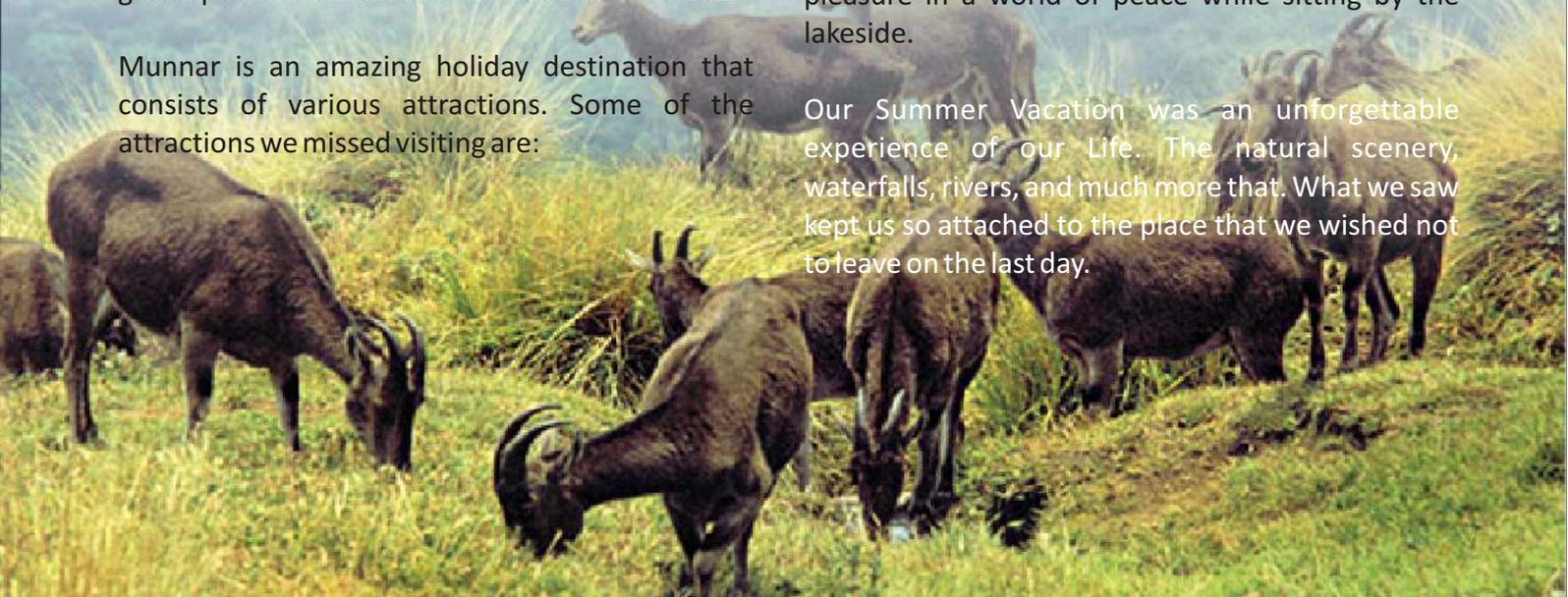
Devikulam Lake

It is also known as Sita Devi Lake situated 7km from Munnar and is famous for its crystal clear water. According to belief, Sita Devi, wife of Lord Rama bathed in this lake.

Mattupetty

It is situated 13 km away from Kerala town. The Mattupetty Lake and dam is famous for its highly specialized dairy farm, where more than 100 varieties of high-yielding cattle can be seen. The main attraction at the vicinity is its Kundala Tea Plantation and Kendall Lake. The Mattupetty Dam and lake is just an ideal picnic spot. The Mattupetty Dam was constructed under the Pallivasal Hydro Electric Project in late 1940. The major purpose was water conservation and power generation. It is a storage concrete gravity dam. The still water of the dam and the nearby beautiful tea ground make Mattupetty an ideal tourist destination. You can take pleasure in a world of peace while sitting by the lakeside.

Our Summer Vacation was an unforgettable experience of our Life. The natural scenery, waterfalls, rivers, and much more that. What we saw kept us so attached to the place that we wished not to leave on the last day.





FRENCH RIVIERA OF THE EAST PUDUCHERRY



Author

Rachael Rosalia V R

Pondicherry, officially known as Puducherry, commonly known as Pondy, gained its prominence as the "French Riviera of the East" after the advent of French colonialism in India. French influence can still be seen in Puducherry today.

The Union Territory of Puducherry includes the old French colonies. Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam. Puducherry and Karaikal are surrounded by the state of Tamil Nadu, while Mahe is surrounded by the state of Kerala and Yanam by Andhra Pradesh.

The original name of the place, Puttucheri, is derived from the Tamil words puttu ("new") and seri ("village"). Pondicherry was made by the French until it was officially renamed Puducherry.

The languages spoken in Puducherry are Tamil, English, French, and Hindi.

Features of Puducherry

The streetscapes and the architectural style of the colonial era exhibit the part of French and the Tamil part is typical of the Tamil architectural style.

The coastal city of Puducherry is famous for its serene beaches. Hotel de Ville, the French War Memorial, the Puducherry Museum, the Aye Mandapam, the Auroville Ashram, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the Promenade, the Limestone Resort, the Old Light House, and the Romain Roland Library are some of the major tourist attractions in Puducherry.

The temple towns of Kanchipuram, Thiruvannamalai, and Chidambaram, the vicinity of Puducherry, the heritage town of Mamallapuram, and the hill stations of Yercaud and Kodaikanal have become popular among travelers. Puducherry, affectionately known as 'Pondy', is a haven for food lovers and shoplifters. Travelers to Puducherry can buy everything from textiles to traditional dolls to perfumes. Known for its palm fronds, beautiful fishing villages, tranquil backwaters, and French boulevard towns, Puducherry is a popular destination for many art festivals and cultural events every year.

Major Attractions of Puducherry

Sri Aurobindo Ashram

Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, one of the most peaceful and spiritual tourist destinations in Pondicherry, is known all over the world and was established in 1926 by Sri Aurobindo. The Ashram is spacious and has libraries. Physical education activities like sports, asanas, strength training, and swimming are found here. In the center of the Ashram is the tomb of Sri Aurobindo under a Frangipani tree. It attracts devotees in India and around the world for spirituality, yoga, and meditation. The visiting timings start from 8:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. and 2:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.

Auroville

Known as the "City of Dawn", Auroville Ashram located in South India is a futuristic township that is the brainchild of the Mother, the spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo. Auroville aims to unite people from all over the world to live together in harmony against the barriers of caste, religion, status, and religion. It is an internationally recognized experiment in human unity and the transformation of consciousness and is engaged in practical research into sustainable living and the future cultural, environmental, social, and spiritual needs of mankind.

On special occasions such as Auroville's anniversary on 28 February and Aurobindo's birthday on August 15th people from different places gather at dawn for experiencing together in silence and concentration the rising of the new day's sun. On these days a big bonfire is prepared and burnt before dawn. On these occasions, special flower arrangements and inspiring recordings will be there which create an intense atmosphere of collective spirituality.

Matrimandir

In the center of the Auroville is the Matrimandir, a large golden globe-like structure that is a large meditation center where one can sit and concentrate within oneself. During the construction of this township, soil from 124 countries was brought to the monastery and mixed in an urn. Today, the urn can be seen in the amphitheater between the Matrimandir gardens.

The Visitors' Centre issue passes for free on Monday to Saturday between 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and Sunday, 9.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. only and Sunday Afternoons remain closed.

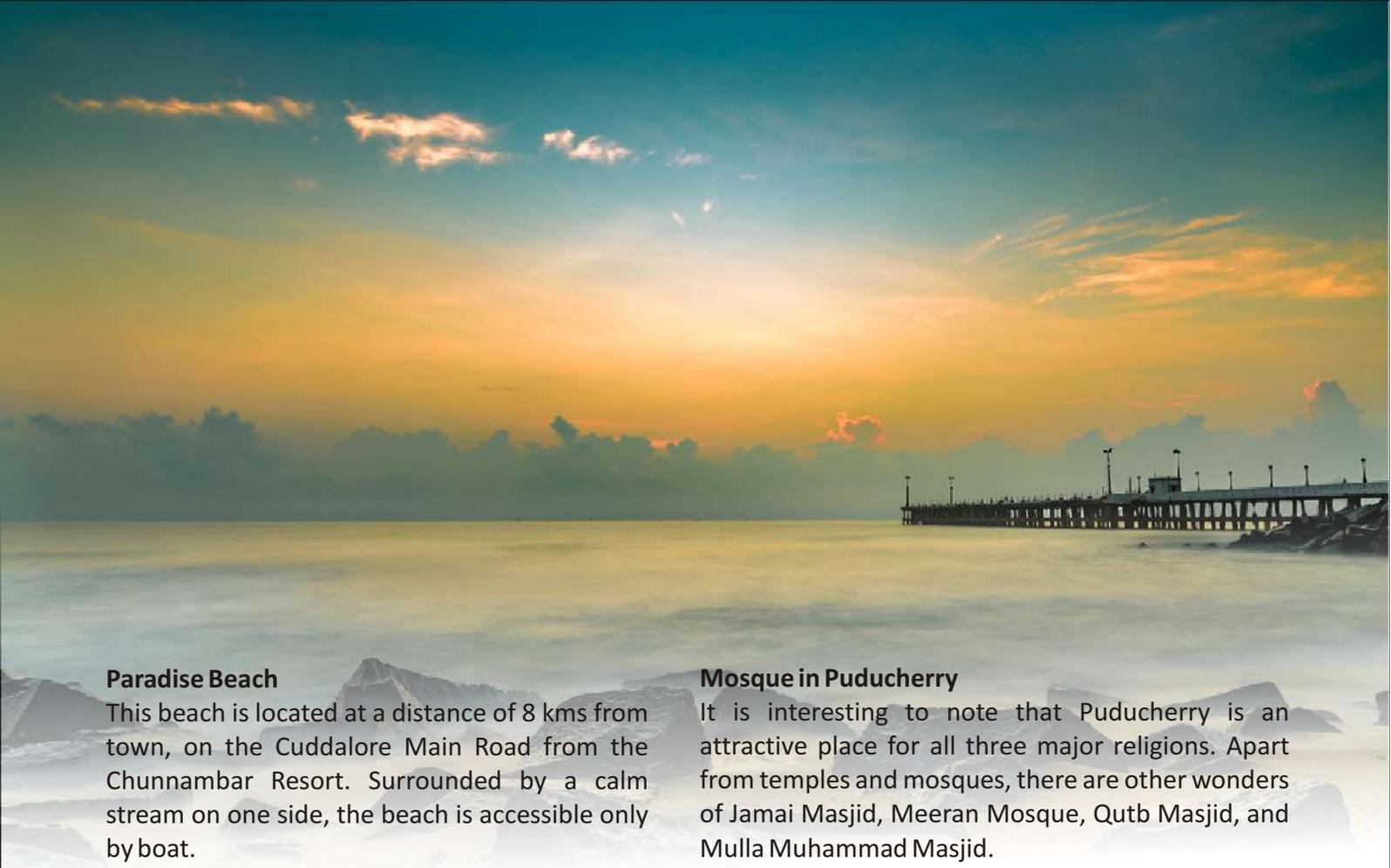
Beaches in Puducherry

Any trip to Puducherry without visiting the beaches would be incomplete.

Promenade

Puducherry is famous for its 1.5 km long promenade that runs along the coast. One can relax or walk at any time of the day. There are many landmarks in front of the sea. War Memorial and touching memory of last dreams, inspiring Statue of John of Arc, Heritage Town Hall, Statue of Mahatma Gandhi, Duplex Statue, Old Lighthouse, Remains of Old Pier, Old Customs House, tell the Glory of the Past. The well-equipped Tourist Information Center is located in a heritage building facing the sea to cater to the needs of tourists.





Paradise Beach

This beach is located at a distance of 8 kms from town, on the Cuddalore Main Road from the Chunnambar Resort. Surrounded by a calm stream on one side, the beach is accessible only by boat.

Auroville Beach

Auroville Beach is right next to the ECR, just across the road to Auroville. The small waves and shallow waters make it an ideal place for swimming.

Temples in Puducherry

The temples in Puducherry are not known in cities like Thanjavur or Chidambaram but they are beautiful in their way, some of which date back to the Chola period in the 10th century AD. Famous temples are ManakulaVinayagarKoil, VaradarajaPerumal Temple, Vedapurishwara Temple, KannigaParameswari Temple, Kamachiyamman Temple, and Sri GokilampalThirukameswara Temple.

Churches in Puducherry

The city of Puducherry is famous for its churches associated with French culture. Churches are equally attractive to many visitors who want to experience French architectural churches. Major churches: Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Church of the Capuchins, Notre Dame de, The Notre Dame des Anqs, Church of the Assumption, the Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Good Health.

Mosque in Puducherry

It is interesting to note that Puducherry is an attractive place for all three major religions. Apart from temples and mosques, there are other wonders of Jamai Masjid, Meeran Mosque, Qutb Masjid, and Mulla Muhammad Masjid.

Puducherry Museum

Located in the former residence of the French Administrator's Building the Puducherry museum is a perfect example of a two-story mansion and most of its exhibits. It has a collection of rare bronzes and sculptures from the Pallava and Chola dynasties, as well as remains of Greek and Roman pottery excavated from Arikamedu, 200-year-old pearls from glass and precious stones and objects from the Sung period in China, a geology room, a shell, and a fossil room, and a collection of handicrafts, coins, church ruins, and French furniture. Also on display is a duplex bed.

Botanical Garden

The Botanical Gardens are located on the south side of the new bus stand. The entrance to the garden is reminiscent of French architecture and stands apart from its surroundings as it smacks into the heart of the old Tamil city. The botanical gardens are adorned with ornate French-style felled trees, beautiful flower beds, gravel paths, and fountains. The French introduced many exotic plants from around the world, many of which flourished. With over 1500 species of plants, it truly qualifies as one of the best botanical gardens in South India.



AN ARTICLE ON

MUZIRIS



Author
Raveenkand

The History Of Muziris

Muziris was an ancient harbour and also an urban center on the Malabar coast. It was the key to interact with the other countries the many of the goods were imported and exported in the harbour in the past like clothing materials glass plates all were traded in the Muziris harbour. The Romans, south Indians, Persians, middle east, north Africa were the 1st traders in the Muziris, and later in the 5th century AD the former Muziris was attracted by the other nationalities too when the Babylonians, Assyrians, and the Egyptians came to the Malabar coast in the search for spices this begins the story of the Muziris and its stark from the early 3000bc and later the middle east group joined the Arabs and Phoenicians for trading in the Muziris and the Muziris in Kodugallur entered into the cartography of the world trade map from their onwards Muziris hold the key of good chunks in Kerala history.

Muziris now

In 1341, the profile of the water bodies of the Periyar river basin, on the Malabar coast in Kerala underwent a major transformation. The prosperous Muziris part at the mouth of the Periyar was affected by the flood and earthquake. On both Muziris destroyed over and the sites were left to conjecture, suddenly it was dropped off from the map. In 2007 and 2008 the Kerala council for historical and research (KCHR) conducted an excavation which revealed valuable information that throws light on the location. The archeological and historical data provides further evidence to show that the port of Muziris was a center for the various business and cultural center, with far searching international associations through the Muziris trade channel. South Indians were avulsed with the opportunity to trade with many civilizations in western Asia, near east Europe and further.

The Muziris now became a heritage project. It is one of the biggest conservation projects undertaken by both government and the state to conserve a rich culture that is more than 3000 years old. The regions under the project is part of a heritage tourism circuit that extends from North Paravur in Ernakulam to Kodungaloor in Thrissur. The forts, palaces, boatyards, cemeteries, shrines, and the monuments that are got in this region are preserved guardingly.

The Muziris' varied performing arts, which embody the Muziris' cultural features, are also being conserved. The initial phase of the project begins with the opening of four of the 27 museums to the public.

The archaeological sites, pattanam, and kottapuram where archeological excavations and explorations are being undertaken will also be the focus on many artifacts of value that have been unearthed through excavations at the various sites in North Paravur - Kodungaloor region at Kerala as part of the project. The clothes, coins, agricultural tools all depict the lives of the people of those times. The Muziris heritage project explains the capitalist of a region which has lost its glory. Muziris is an ancient town that represents the beauty that is filled with history and culture. Through this project we get to experience the thrill of time traveling back for centuries. These old towns not only comprises to history and culture but also the remains to its part glory it is still observable in the architecture too. The Muziris project was started by the Kerala government to commemorate the historical and cultural significance of Muziris. The region is filled with numerous monuments of a gone era, that remind us of a vast and vivid part. The project is designed to involve and unity the local community in all intended developmental initiatives.

The paliem nalukettu is located in Chendamangaam near North Paravur in Ernakulam district. This is built by the Paliyath achan for the female members of the Paliyam family. It is 350 years old palace. It is Kerala-style house with a central courtyard called nadumuttam and the rooms are placed on every four sides.



The Paliem Dutch Palace

The Paliem Dutch palace is built by the Paliyath achan during the 16th century for his safety and security when the raja was under threat by the portages the building features is it is built using carved wooden staircases and thick walls the women's are not allowed in the palace the elder members are only allowed a could stay in the palace.

The Chendamengalam Jewish Synagogue

The Chendamengalam Jewish synagogue is constructed during the 17th century the land was donated by the Paliyath family for the Jewish men to gather in the prayer and the women can pray in their section upstairs behind the wooden screen. The synagogue was made of colorful glass and metals in the form of lotus patterned printed ceilings.

The Paravur Jewish Synagogue

The Paravur Jewish synagogue is situated in a street in Paravur it was built in 1615 it was built in a good structure this museum will speak about the history of the Jewish in Kerala and also the synagogue is the great study of Jewish history.

Some of the highlights of the Muziris Heritage Project is that it is the largest heritage convention project in India and the first project of the government of Kerala that is done perfectly. The Muziris heritage has 25 museums in that the monuments have been kept and preserved. The project has won the pacific Asia award in 2015 and has a good positive impact on the people.

This project has been implemented to make an idea and understanding about the history of the place and the cultural events and traditions. The project was made accessible for all the customers and to practice and promote sustainable tourism. The project has also created employment opportunities.



ROSEHILL ADVENTURE



Author
AkshayThulasy

Rose Hill is located at a distance of 35 km from Punalur via Aryankavu. The journey from Aryankavu is about nine kilometers through the jungle. Shortly after the start of the journey, the eastern region begins to feel quite cold. There are only a few houses in the beginning. Then there is the desolate forest path. It has been a few years since tourists started coming here. Therefore, human waste is generally less. Animals such as elephants, leopards, llamas, and wild buffalo roam around the forest, but it is not difficult for travellers to navigate.

The road to Rose Hill is very bad. So only youngsters on bikes come here. The ascent of the road ends near the Shenturuni Forest Check Post. The details of the oncoming vehicle and the passenger should be recorded here. The village of Rosemala can be reached by a 1 km drive.

Tourists visiting the village of Rosmala are first greeted by the Kolinchi, which is cultivated at an unobstructed distance. Kolinchi is harvested every three years. Many houses have local honey for sale to tourists. The main occupation here is agriculture. In the early days, pepper, ginger, and cloves were cultivated in abundance. However, with the increase in wildlife threats, rubber cultivation has begun. Currently, turmeric, betel nut, and sorghum are also cultivated. Cloves begin to bloom in December. Last year, one local planter received Rs 700 for dried flowers.

The viewpoint of Senthuruni Ecotourism is right next to the village. Admission is Rs 25 per person. You can reach the viewpoint by taking a ticket and walking for about 200 meters. The view from here is a favourite of everyone. The views are of the catchment area of the Parapar Dam. The Senthuruni and Umayar rivers, which flow into the dam, form about 15 small islands. There is not much human touch here.

The road, which was once used by locals on foot and in small vehicles, is submerged in the Rosmalayat. The road was submerged when the dam overflowed. It was then that the locals became isolated and had to travel extra through Aryankavu.

It stretches for 24 km along the Umayar, Rosmalayar, and Senthuruni rivers. As the summer heats up, the water level in the river drops. Tourists can also enjoy elephants, wild buffalo and a distant view of the river for drinking water. In addition, a long list of the agricultural wealth of Rose Hill could be seen. But the road upgrade to Rose Hill is complete.

With the installation of a new viewing tower and binoculars for sightseeing, more tourists are expected to flock here. It will also be another source of income for tourism. In addition, hundreds of vehicles and tourists visit the village of Rosmala every day when tourism arrives.

The experience I got from this place was very pleasing. Before I had no great idea about the place but since I got there the desire to know every single thing about that place has been increasing. The experience of going to that place in the middle of so many problems but after getting into it I forgot myself and I forgot my problems. One thing that stuck in my mind was that I wanted to make the settings that older people should enjoy. One can see new sights and new things no matter how many times they go.





THE PARADISE OF INDIAN OCEAN

MALDIVES



Author
Rahul Reghu

Maldives welcomes you with its aquamarine waters and shimmering white shores and soon you will feel all your worries simply melting away. Whether you're looking to sit back and relax or for some adventure, Maldives is perfect for you.



Maldives is made up of over 1000 Islands, of which only 200 are inhabitable. The coral Islands of this country are enveloped by blue lagoons and caring palm trees. The diverse marine life is certainly eye catching and the water spots are world class. The capital city of Male is the best of for those who want to absorb the local life and local cuisine of small days. While the island of Biyadhoo is the best bet for those of you who can't wait to dive into the ocean, deep diving, snorkelling and scuba diving are all possible here and in case you have a dreamy, tropical romance on your mind. Make your way to Maafushivaru for some uninterrupted moments.

Maldives offers the free visa on arrival to Indian tour. Show your passport, your hotel bookings and fly details to the immigration officer and you will be given a 30 day to VISA to Maldives that too, free of cost. Maldives has a tropical climate and usually remain sunny throughout the year. The average temperature hovers between 23 and 31 degrees Celsius. but water sports can be best enjoyed with minimum rainfall, so the dry season is the best time to go that lies between November and April. Taking a flight to Maldives is the best option to reach the island country. Male airport is the main hub for international flight and you can get a direct flight from major Indian cities like Delhi, Mumbai or Kochi. If you're looking to go off beat, you can also board a cruise from Mumbai or Kochi to Mali. The currency used as the Maldivian Rufiyah, which is valued at slightly less than five Indian rupees.

However, most local places except US dollars so you can carry those as well. Maldives has enough to offer to keep your itinerary full.

One unmissable experience to add to your Maldives bucket list is to stay in a water Villa. These pictures perfect villas that float over the ocean are a hot favourite for couples and honeymooners. The best way to enjoy the Crystal-clear waters of Maldives is by catamaran sailing. These peaceful boats can easily be booked at most resorts and offer you a quiet and picturesque experience. One of the most romantic experiences to have in Maldives is to take a chopper ride over the country's most beautiful Islands and beaches as the wind whips your If you can't get enough of the water, we can choose from the many water sports available. Beginners can opt for kayaking or snorkelling. Pros should try sky boarding, and extreme adventure sport, where jets propel you about the water.

Your tip to Maldives will remain incomplete without a scuba diving session. Fish Head, Banana Reef and Manta Point are among the most popular diving spots. Maya Thila is the best spot for a night dive and allows you to swim with Sharks, Barracudas and Jack fish. A single diving session will cost you between Rs. 4000 to Rs. 8000, depending on the season and the diving point. Earn your meal by going fishing. You can choose between a guided tour or go on your own If you feel you know the routs. Many resorts allow you to barbeque your catch and eat it.

The fascinating thing about Maldives is that every island has its own charm, its own quirks, and its own specialities. Male. The capital of Maldives, is a little removed from the picturesque Islands, but it offers a glimpse into the architecture and history of the nation. The Male Friday, Mark, and national museums are must visit. The most fascinating thing about Utheemu island is its wooden palace that dates back to over 500 years ago. The Royal Palace will owe you with its grand interiors and intricate carvings. Utheemi also offers the best sunset views in all of Maldives.





The Idyllic Maafushi Island is a honeymooner's paradise and offers a laid-back pace of life. With its sun-kissed beaches and friendly locals, Maafushi is sure to charm you. No end. Vadhoo Island offers a quiet and peaceful abode where you can admire the stunning sea of stars. Under the moonlight, the water glows bright blue and looks like crashing stars on the beach. Visitors from across the globe come to see this jaw-dropping natural phenomenon. Seafood, local fruit, and spices make up a majority of Maldivian cuisine. Mas Huni, a mixture of tuna, onion, and grated coconut, is a local delicacy and is best enjoyed with bread. Another popular dish is Bis Keemiya, a snack that resembles a samosa, but is filled with either tuna or a boiled egg.

If you are dying to escape the chaos of daily life and unwind on untouched beaches, Maldives is the perfect place for you. Plan your dream vacation to Maldives.



THE HEAVEN CALLED KASHMIR



Author
Sravan C Binnu

It was the end of March when I started to look at different places for me to travel. Being a solo traveler I was hooked to the idea of doing a hitchhiking trip to northeast India. I booked train tickets to Kolkata and waited eagerly for the day to come. As the pandemic news spread all throughout media. I started to hesitate and came to the conclusion that it was a bad idea to travel and canceled all my plans. It was hard but still a reasonable thing to do at that moment.

Few days after that I was talking with a good friend of mine named Ashiq who currently pursuing an engineering degree in TKM College Kollam told me about Kashmir and few of them are planning to go there. As destination research is part of my Travel and tourism course, I began to create an itinerary for them to enjoy a great time in Kashmir. Even in these times I never thought about going with them which looking back is a funny moment. At last, on March 28th I provided them the necessary information and that's when Ashiq asked me, if I want to tag along with them. Without hesitating I said okay and was packing my backpack to leave the next day. Randomness is a part of traveler's lifestyles and this was a perfect example of that.



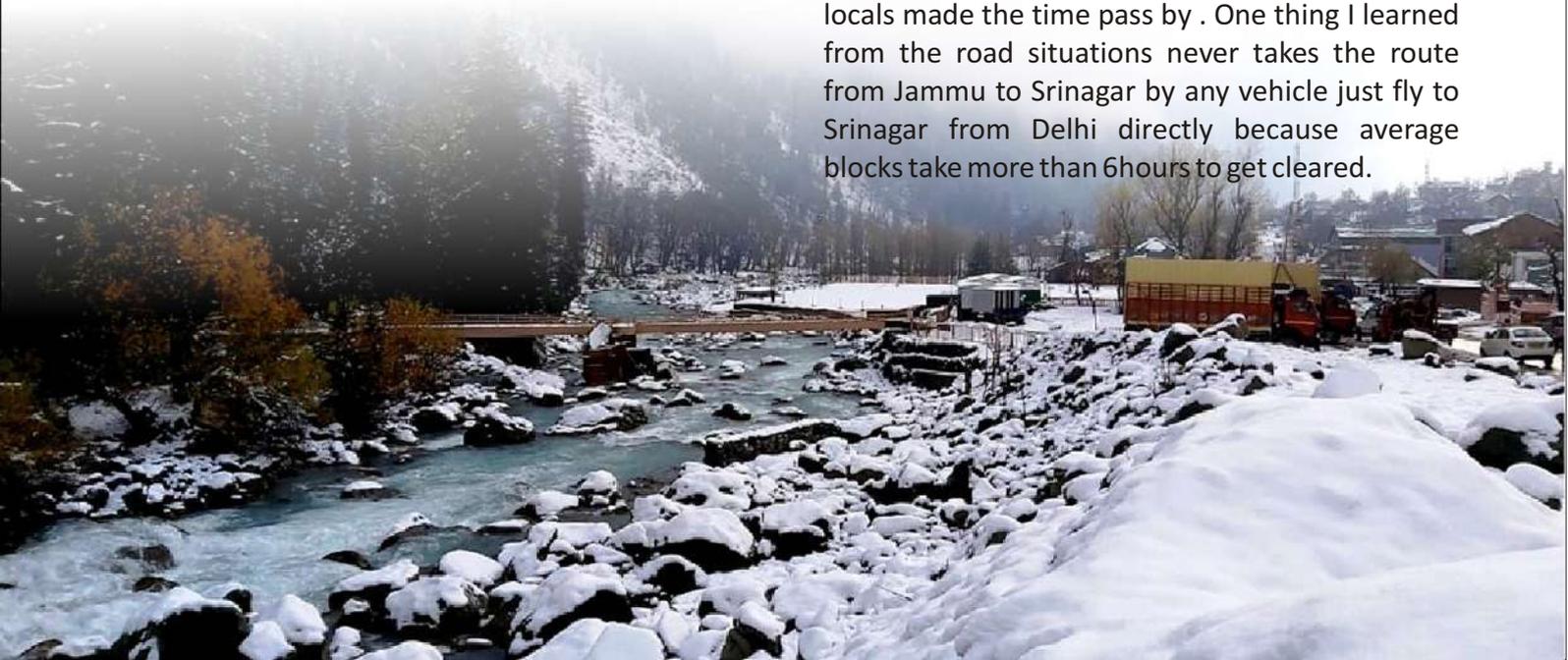
On 29th evening 4 pm I got into Mangla Lakshadweep Express to Delhi and met with my 3 friends from Kollam, Ashiq, Ali, and Yaseen. I knew Ashiq and Ali briefly before this trip but it was the first time meeting Yaseen. I never imagined myself going to Kashmir especially with 3 friends of mine because most trips that I went were solo but Kashmir gave me a whole different experience with these guys.

Train rides in India are pretty hectic and fun. We joked around that if you want to see the real India and its people travel the country in a sleeper/general compartment. As hours went by we bonded quickly and start to talk, laugh, and have fun around the train. Met more travelers and exchanged books and started playing intense card games which made the time pass by.

Finally, on 31st March we reached Delhi at 1pm. To paint a picture of my group, Ali and I have traveled to Delhi before this and for me, it was my third time coming so I had a pretty good idea about going around. While Ashiq and Yaseen have done trips in Kerala. Delhi as most know is a wild place. Streets filled with people and animals and instantly you will like it or hate it. I never was a fan of the crowd but it was comforting to know our train to Jammu Tawi will be leaving at 8pm, so we had few hours to tour Delhi. My first thought after two days of sitting in the train was to take a shower and all agreed so we went to the AC waiting lounge and freshened ourselves. We saw few police officers checking RT PCR certificates of travelers which we didn't have and could get troubled if we got caught. So we waited for some time and left when there was nobody checking at the entrance. it was a place to catch one's breath from the crowd.

The plan was to take a taxi from Udhampur to Banihal and then take a local train from Banihal to Srinagar which only cost ₹20 for a 2hour journey. After few minutes of bargaining, Sabith got the driver to lower the fare from 1000 to 600. There was also a local guy going to Banihal with us in the taxi. He was a strange character which made our trip interesting. Every 30 minutes he would light up a cigarette and have a smoke while talking to his girlfriend the entire time. I was laughing inside the way he was acting yet I enjoyed his company and he provided us some local information. After few hours of driving, we came to stop near a small dhaba at Ramban and our fellow passenger told us to try the Rajma Chawal which turned to taste pretty good. We came to a quick realization about the road situations from Jammu to Srinagar because of the unending road blocks. That's why most prefer travelling by air to Srinagar from Delhi. Our local train was leaving from Banihal at 3pm and we knew reaching will be possible. But the blocks were unending and hours went by. The scenic views outside made us stay calm and by the time we reached Banihal it was 6 pm and our train was long gone and knew our only chance is to take another taxi to Srinagar. After quite some bargaining we lowered the price from 500 to 300 because of Sabith. Sabith was like our superhero during the taxi ride because only he knew how to speak Hindi perfectly among us and we backed him. This time it was a tempo traveler and there were almost 15 people inside the bus.

Once they knew we were from Kerala they all got excited and started to ask interesting questions and made the whole journey exciting. Even though roadblocks were happening outside chats with the locals made the time pass by. One thing I learned from the road situations never takes the route from Jammu to Srinagar by any vehicle just fly to Srinagar from Delhi directly because average blocks take more than 6hours to get cleared.



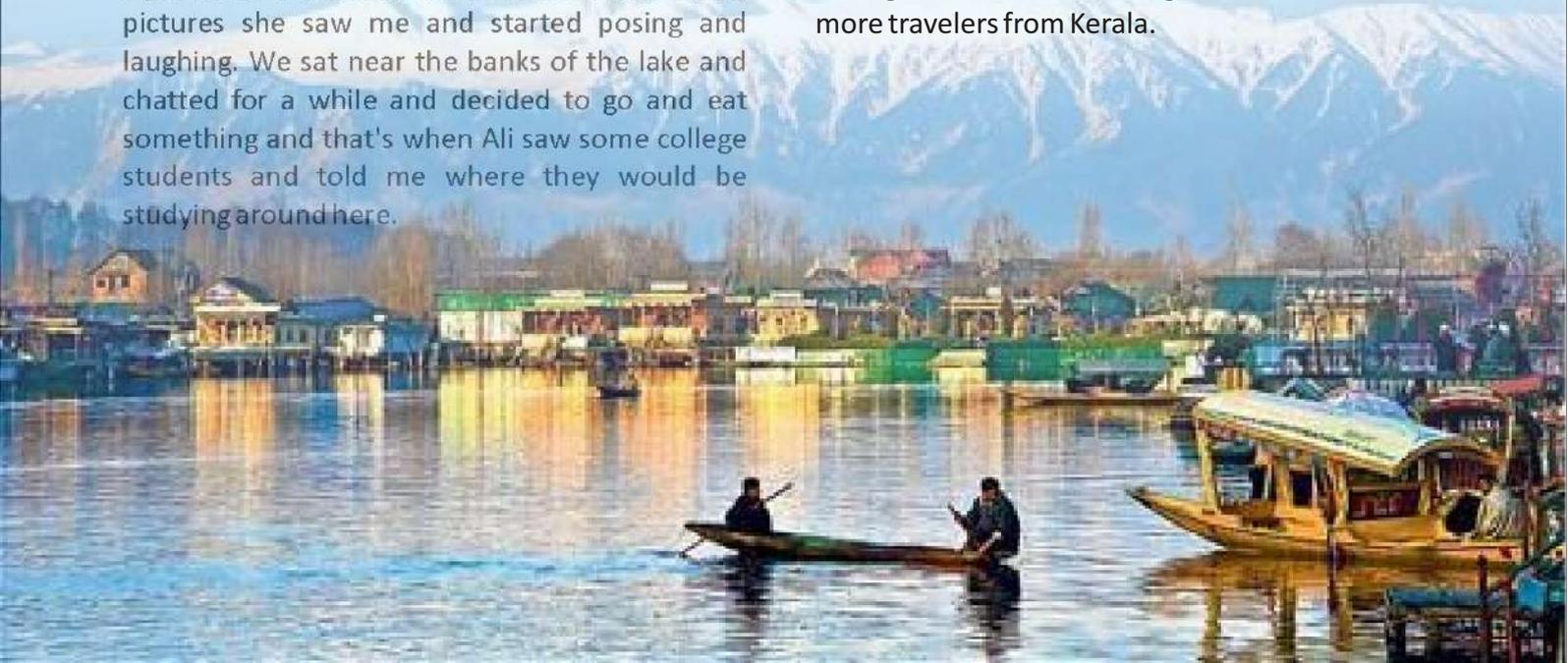
Udhampur to Srinagar is only 200km which took us 13 hours due to the road condition and finally we reached Srinagar at 11 30pm. We parted away from Sabith and Aslam as their stay was near Dal Lake while ours were near Khan Khona road. We didn't had a clue what to do and whom to ask because there where nobody other than the military personnel. Because of no cell reception calling the owner Sahil was impossible. Finally, I told Ali to come with me to ask the soldiers across the road about the direction to our homestay. We explained our situation and one soldier took the number from our cell and called the owner Sahil to come pick us up. We all were glad and started chatting with the soldiers and was excited. They told us to have a good time and by that time Sahil with his father came to pick us up. We went to the room and used the Wi-Fi service to chat with our family and friends and went to bed by 2am and the last think i remember is the weather showing it was 8° Celsius outside.

Finally our first day of journey started with local sightseeing in Srinagar, Sahil helped us to get a local sim card for directions and told us about the places nearby. Srinagar is a land of gardens and shrines. All tugged up in ourwoollen clothes we first headed to Hazratbal Mosque. The majestic and architecturally unique Hazratbal Mosque is situated on the left side of Dal Lake. Ashiq and Yaseen went inside for praying while I and Ali decided to roam nearby market area .I found this little girl who had come with her parents and was playing with the pigeons. It was as if she had been included in the group and she was playing with her friends.

I got some wonderful shots. While I was taking pictures she saw me and started posing and laughing. We sat near the banks of the lake and chatted for a while and decided to go and eat something and that's when Ali saw some college students and told me where they would be studying around here.

So we started to follow them and then saw the Kashmir University. Our owner Sahil is also studying here and decided to check out inside and walked near the campus. By this time we got the call from Ashiq asking where we were and decided to go back to them .After taking some pictures we went to the Shankaracharya Temple a temple devoted to Lord Shiva. It was at the hilltop at a height of approximately 1000 ft. Ashiq was sceptical to climb so many stairs but finally made it. I think there were more than 500 stairs and was freezing cold and we had to take of our shoes to enter the temple which turned down to be a bad idea because it felt like walking on ice. We got a pretty breathtaking view of Srinagar from top but camera was not allowed due to security reasons. By this time it was almost 4pm so we decided to go back to our homestay and take the shikara ride in Dal Lake.

Sahil's father told us to follow him to his Shikara and we payed him?300 per person to be in the lake for 2 hours. Dal Lake is known as the “Jewel in the crown of Kashmir” And also plays an important role in commercial day to day operations in fishing and local businesses. We can see floating houseboats on each side of the lakes which provide accommodations and they're own shikara services. There are small vendors who sell various things who come near your shikara to showcase them and sell local items and artifacts .In Kashmir, a Kahwa (the local tea) is also sold which was good. As the sun was setting down the lake felt like gold and was the golden hour to take some amazing photographs to keep as memories. We went to the floating market and bought some jackets for Yaseen and went back to our homestay. Sahil told us that he has arranged a taxi to Sonamarg and we met with two more travelers from Kerala.



Next morning we packed our jackets and met with our fellow passengers and our driver Mr. Noshad. Luckily it was a sunny day and there were no rains predicted in the weather. Sonamarg is in the Ganderbal District of Kashmir and is famous for its Honeymoon resorts for couples. Sonamarg from the word itself refers to as 'Meadow of Gold'. Sonamarg was approximately 2 hours journey and the whole drive what we saw was blanket of snow on either sides of the road. Sonamarg was just filled with snow activities like skiing and trekking. We decided to walk and see things for ourselves. We trekked the small hill to see the spectacular view of the mountains in the surrounding areas and took photos. As everything near Sonamarg was expensive, we didn't indulge ourselves in any of those and just roamed around for hours before meeting with our co passengers and left to eat something from a hotel. By this time it was almost 4 and unlike other tourist places in India, Kashmiri prefer to be home before 7pm. Due to security issues and other problems it will be hard to navigate in the night so we went to our taxi and went back. Sahils family had prepared us South Indian dishes like Chicken Curry with rice and some pickles. They made us feel like home and that love and hospitality made the food tastier.

On the third day, we decided to go to Pahalgam. Pahalgam was totally different from other places in Kashmir. Pahalgam is known as the Valley of shepherds. Filled with beautiful meadows and pine forests Pahalgam gave a different perspective about Kashmir for me. Pahalgam is 90km from Srinagar. It took us about 3-4 hours to reach Pahalgam from our homestay and saw many military personnel's and other training institutions. After a while the Lidder river emerges from the corner and becomes a perfect partner for the mountains. Finally we reached Pahalgam and went to see the mini Switzerland. Even before starting our trek locals came to us and said it was impossible for us to trek to Mini Switzerland and suggested us to hire a mule. The horse owners will ask you a ransom of money but you need to negotiate a lot with them. But it was different in our case; we decided it would be fun to walk up there. Which turned out to be a bad idea. It was 7km of steep climb in rugged terrain and was so slippery.

The mules passed through the edges of the hills and it was different to watch people having a bumpy but effortless ride in them while we were struggling to climb still which made us all laugh. Laughing and fooling around helped us in many ways and diverted our minds from these climbs. After few hours of climb I was mesmerized by the beauty of the wavy grassland surrounded by the lush green trees and flat meadows with snowy cliffs within the frame. Other areas of Kashmir were filled with snow while Pahalgam felt closer to nature. There are many cooking stalls to eat after a tiring climb. After hours of lying on the ground, walking around, taking a picture with Shepherds we felt hungry and decided to treat ourselves with Maggie and trek back down. After 30 minutes of descending I lost Ali and Yaseen. They went fast and were gone and I and Ashiq decided to climb down together. It was almost 2 hours when we reached the taxi stand where everybody was waiting and we felt Pahalgam.

On the fourth day, we left for Gulmarg. Gulmarg is 50 km from Srinagar and took us about 2 hours to reach there. Gulmarg is a popular skiing destination all around the world which lies in the Baramulla district of Kashmir. After reaching Gulmarg we rented boots and went to take tickets from the Gondola. Gondola is a cable car service which takes you up to 14000 feet which is the highest cable car service in the world. There are two phases of cable car ride one being the first phase 700 till Kongdori and second costing 900 to the top of the peak. It took us to mesmerizing views of the Pir Panjal Ranges and snow covered huts and pine trees. It took about 25 minutes to reach the top and we saw skiers from all over the world skiing and showcasing their skills in the slopes of the mountains. To get better views we decided to climb higher in deep snows and with so much effort and had a snowball party at the top. We returned after spending 2 hours in the snow at 4PM as Gondola service is from 10am- 5pm. After returning with cold face and sore throat a sip of hot Kashmiri Kahwa made the whole experience. We all were exhausted and just went to bed as soon as we reached our homestay.

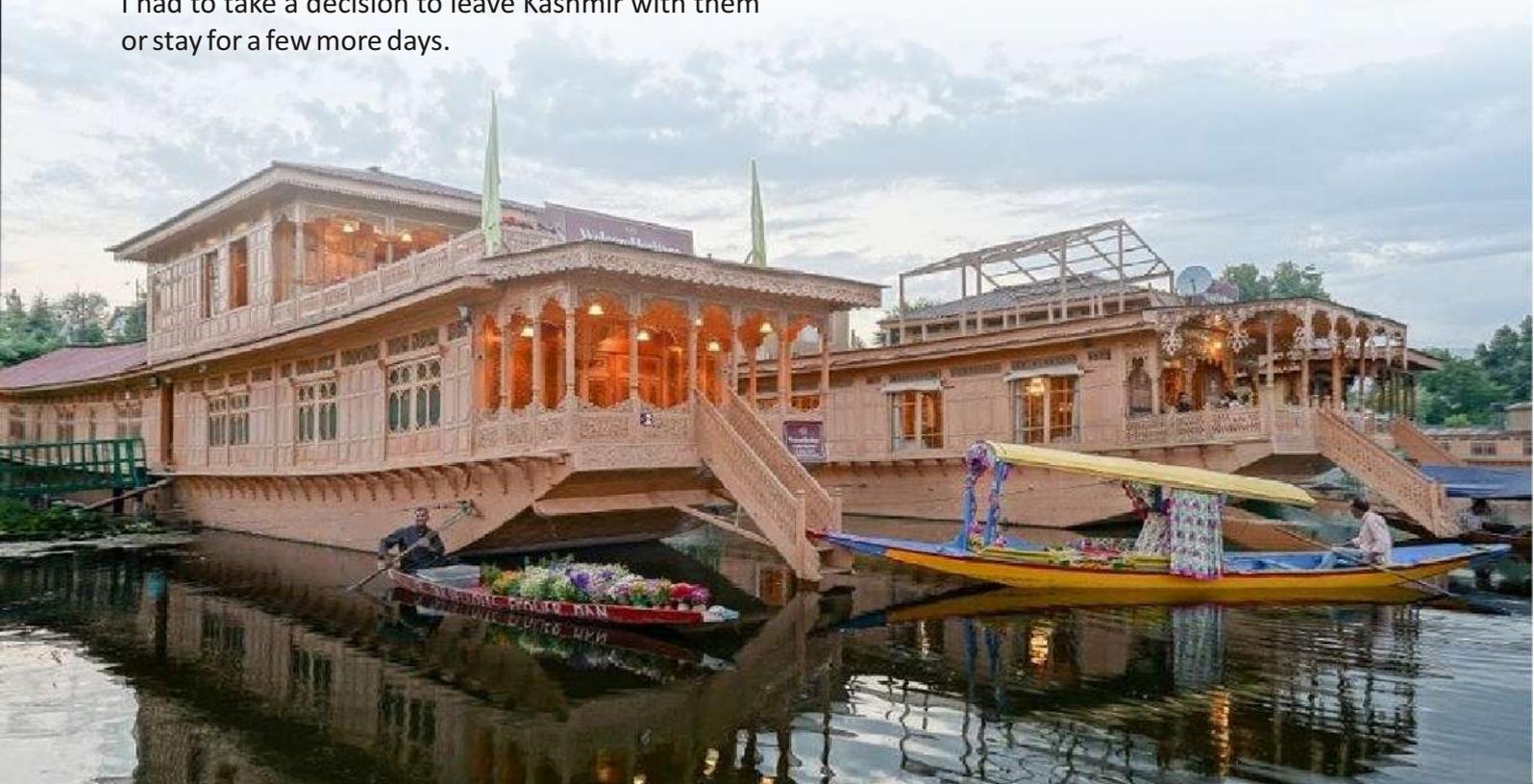
Finally it was our final day ,we decided to take it slow and enjoy our time around Srinagar area before we leave to Delhi. Due to no rest in between days Ashiq felt a little sick so we started very slowly. We went to the tulip garden first. Tulip Garden is the Asia's largest garden which is situated at the foothills of Zabarwan ranges and surrounded by the Dal Lake. Best time to visit the Tulip Garden is April and which made us lucky. As soon as we step inside the garden , we could feel the refreshing smells of tulips and it's so large that as far our eyes can see . Soothing music played by bands and walking around while having some drinks enjoying the views fills our heart . Besides all this visitors sit around the fountain and talk ,take pictures . Tulips in different color and variety is a great image to take back home.

Other gardens in Srinagar are Shallimar bagh , Mughal garden and Nishant Bagh but we didn't have time to spend . So we decided to go Khayam road and have a street food tour before leaving Srinagar. As we walked inside the street we were welcomed by strong aroma of kebabs all around. Grilled kebabs with smoky charcoal flavor hanging in front of all shops was a delight to see. After eating Kashmiri food we ended our tour with an ice cream and went back to our room.

One of my friends knew a local Kashmiri guy studying in his college and I wanted to visit the villages of Kashmir and spend a week more and that was my plan. As Ali, Yaseen and Ashiq wanted to go to Delhi because tickets had been already booked. So I had to take a decision to leave Kashmir with them or stay for a few more days.

As my local friend in Kashmir was having some internal security issues in his village, he told me not to come. So next morning we said goodbye to Sahil and his family and took a taxi to Jammu at 7am. Sahil suggested there would be traffic blocks so early travel will be more convenient for us to reach Jammu Tawi before 8pm . We left Srinagar with love and some amazing memories. Just as we thought traffic blocks started which was way worse than before. In this situation some told that we had to stay for a whole day before the army gives permission to go forward. But we were patient enough to sit through this.

After hours of staying put the army allowed us to go. Our driver was a crazy person who took us through different villages and roads which were not normal day-to-day travel paths for the people. We realized we wouldn't be able to catch our train on time . Finally, after 16 hours of driving, we reached Jammu Tawi at 1 am and caught the next bus to Delhi as soon as possible because our train to Ernakulam will leave Delhi by 6pm .After 12 hours of travel, we reached Delhi and booked a room to freshen up before leaving. We left Delhi thinking when's our next adventure together and I learned a great lesson about how much fun it would be to travel as a group.





A BUDGET GATEWAY TO

MUMBAI



Author
Amjith K S

I mostly travel within Kerala and I always had a good desire to travel all over India especially the North and the East Indian sides. Like all travelers, I have a dream trip on my bucket list, which is to travel to Himachal and Ladakh but haven't been able to go that far yet. Honestly, I didn't get the opportunity or time to go to any of these places due to my academics but still, I was determined to go somewhere. So I got to go on a good trip, not to my dream place but it was worth it. It was an unforgettable trip of my life. Here I am sharing about that journey. So the place was Mumbai, known as the "City of dreams".

Before I start my journey, I would like to say the behind story that how I decided to go on that journey. This trip happened in 2019. It was my friend who came up with the idea to go there. He was thinking of going solo but he asked me if I would accompany him and without any other thoughts, I said I would love to. As I said earlier, I had never travelled outside Kerala like this before so I was hesitant to ask my parents about the trip, anyway I asked my mother that I wanted to go on a trip with my friend.



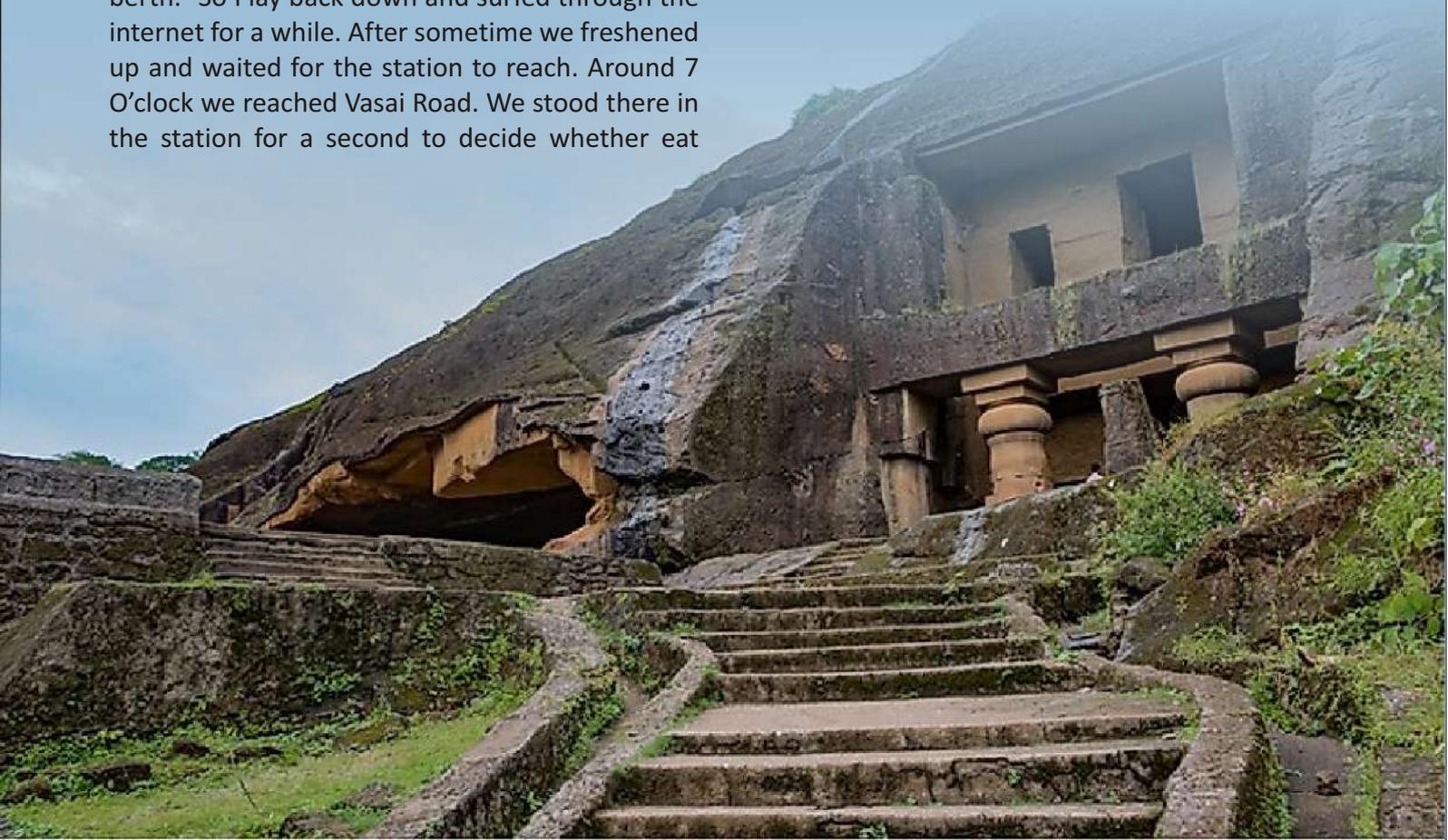


At first, she laughed thinking it was some kind of a joke because I have never asked her before about going on a trip like that but I asked again and she asked curiously where I am going, then I said that I am going to Gateway of India and also visiting a few nearby places. After a moment of thinking, she asked when I am going then I said next week so she replied with a smile of agreement. I thought everything will be alright because she said 'ok'. So, about the trip, we planned a budget trip because we were still students and didn't have enough money to spend on a luxury trip but even we wondered if it would be possible to travel with less money, about Rs.1500 per person. The total amount included transportation expenses, accommodation cost, food and water, and also, we managed to add another Rs.500 in case if there were any needs or miscellaneous expenses. Anyway, we started the journey on Saturday, 5th October from Ernakulam North Railway station. We were scheduled to leave on the train at 5:30a.m., so we arrived at the station around 5:15 am and booked two tickets to Vasai Road in Mumbai. Tickets cost only Rs.500 for both of us and the train was Nizamuddin express. The train was supposed to arrive at 5:30 but it reached half an hour later. After about 6:00, we boarded the train and about 15 minutes later the train left the station. As soon as we got on the train, we grabbed the first seats because we bought the General compartment tickets, it's usually a well-crowded compartment so it could have been really difficult to get a seat but there weren't as many people as we expected.

After a few hours later there was no one in the compartment except us. It felt calm so we thought we should have our breakfast then. We had taken some food and water from home so that we would not have to spend any money and it was a day-long journey. If we hadn't eaten, we would have been exhausted. So, when we had our breakfast, we were somewhere in the part of Kozhikode district. The journey was long, staying in the train for 24 hrs and more, doing nothing and it should have been more stressful especially in the general compartment but somehow, we managed to enjoy the trip by talking, seeing natural beauty outside, and for most of the time we researched on the Internet about the places we were going to visit, "how many places we could cover in 2 days and where we could afford to stay for the night". We had a lot of things going on in our minds back then. So back on the train, a few hours later somewhere in Karnataka in the afternoon we happened to meet two gentlemen who were Malayalees like us. They were looking for a mobile charging socket to charge their cell phones because in their compartment the switchboard was not working. Fortunately, we had one working in our compartment and they asked us for permission to plug in their charger. So, we allowed them and they requested us if we could look after their cell phones while it is charging because their luggage was in their compartment so, they didn't want to wait. Then they head back to their compartment and they got back within an hour for the cell phones.

And I began a conversation asking where were they headed to and from where, they said they were from Kayamkulam and going to Gujarat for a job interview then they asked about us and we shared ours and we talked for a little while after that they went back to their business and we back to ours. Travelling on a train can be hard usually gets us bored, restless and exhausted but sometimes we may find it enjoyable even when you're alone, when the moment you see wonderful nature and the beautiful living things around through the window, the view makes us feel hollow inside like there's nothing to worry or fear about but only a peaceful feeling, that moment will never fade from our mind and this gives us a reason to travel. Those were the exact feelings in that train while going through the Konkan Railway. The evening was beautiful because we could see the Sunset at the nearby beach through the wilderness, as the train was moving forward, the wilderness kept getting smaller and smaller, then there was only this view of the golden sun dipping below the horizon and then it began to fade away. After a while, sometime in the night, we reached Madgaon, and then we ate some food before going to sleep. We slept a little early to get up early before we reach the station, unfortunately, I woke up too early in the morning around 3'Oclock and was cold. Also, I found out that there were other passengers on board and they were sleeping below us, while we were on the berth. So I lay back down and surfed through the internet for a while. After sometime we freshened up and waited for the station to reach. Around 7 O'clock we reached Vasai Road. We stood there in the station for a second to decide whether eat

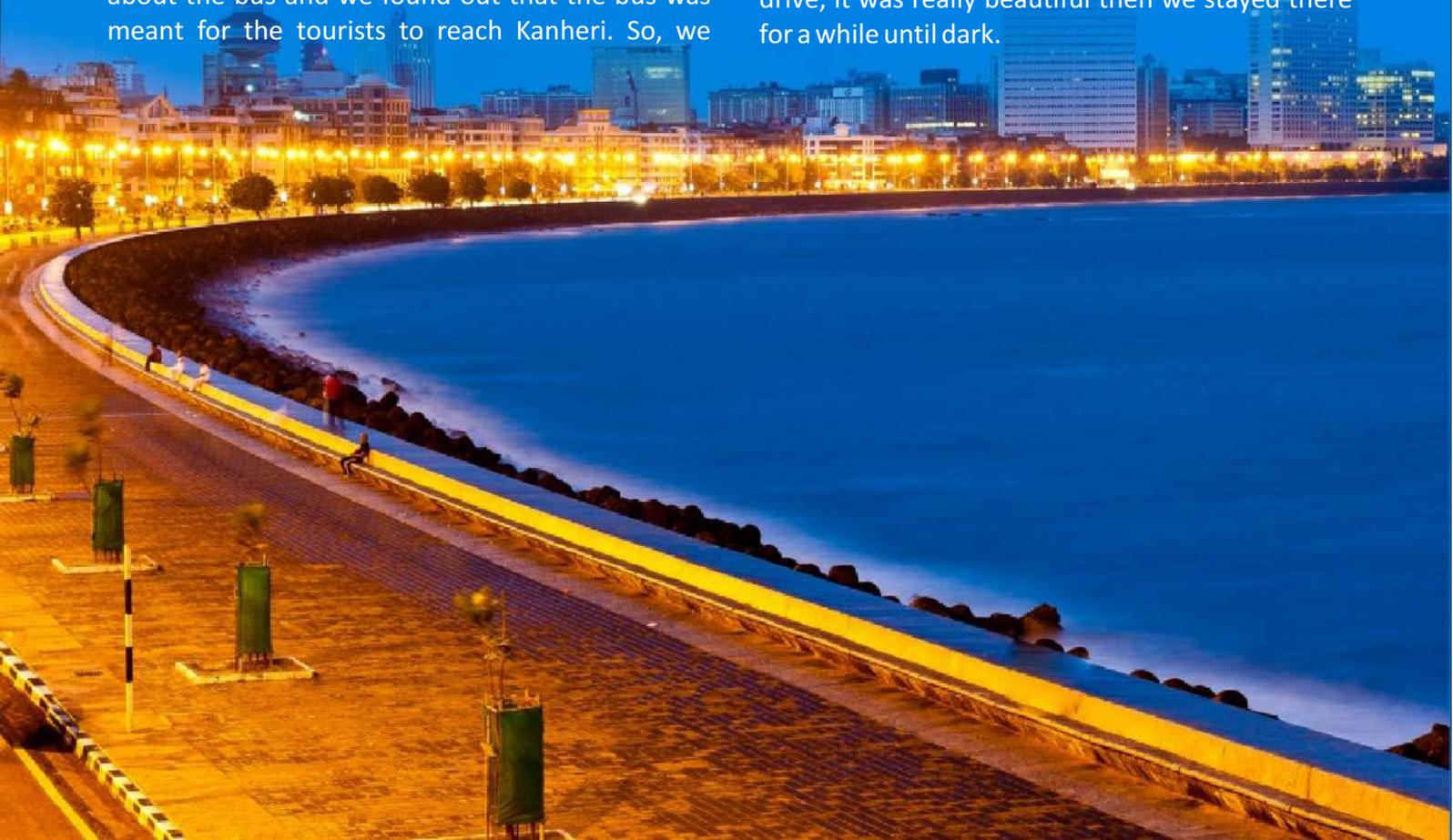
breakfast or to start visiting first. Back on the train, we talked about going to Andheri when we reach the station. So, we thought about it and then we decided to go to Andheri first and eat breakfast from there. We had no idea how to get there so we looked in ' Google' and then we found out that there are always local trains, an easy way to reach anywhere in Mumbai and only costs up to ₹30 but in our case, it only took Rs.10each to get to Andheri. Apart from the train, we also could have reached there by cab or bus which costs a couple of hundreds maybe a thousand. So first of all, Andheri wasn't a part of the plan, we just thought about it after everything was planned. So, we just reached there and wandered around for a little because we had no idea about Andheri and what's there to visit so we looked up on the internet about their nearest tourist place to go but it wasn't that near as we expect. We could have gone there, it was just 3.5 km to a tourist place called Mahakali caves but if we had gone there, our original plan could have been failed because we had to reach the station Borivali within an hour to reach the Sanjay Gandhi national park on time which was 'our first destination of the original plan'. So, we didn't want to alter our original plan. After all the thinking we decided to eat something so we found a hotel and had breakfast there.



Next, we headed to Borivali, about Rs.5 train ticket to reach there from Andheri. We reached the station around 10 O'clock, from there to Sanjay Gandhi National Park takes only 2.5 km. So we took a walk and reached there within 20 minutes, there was a small line of people in front of the gateway to Sanjay Gandhi N. P and it was the ticket counter distributing the ticket. So we got into the line to buy the tickets and we got to spend around Rs.200 for both, the amount included cost for the entry, camera, and the other charge. The Other charge may have been charged for the Kanheri caves because it was the only thing we got there to see, I'm not saying that there was nothing to see, it's because we had only the time and money for the Kanheri caves. The Sanjay Gandhi national park is a huge place around 87 sqkm areas, within that radius, there are lots of interesting things to see and experience like trekking, boating, safari ride, and other things then there are lots of wildlife animals and every kind of flora and fauna. The Park is worth visiting for everyone especially for the adventure seekers and just need a day or two to experience everything there. If we had the time and money, we could have explored everything in that park but instead, we spent on the Kanheri caves which was a beautiful cave. The caves were 5kms into that park and everyone had their vehicles to reach there but we didn't have any ride so we walked a few then we saw a bus was coming towards us, so we asked someone about the bus and we found out that the bus was meant for the tourists to reach Kanheri. So, we

waited for its return and took the bus to Kanheri. It was an awesome place with lots of rock-cut caves, sculptures, statues. At the entrance, there was some kind of notes on a wedge-shaped rock about the history behind the Caves and it says that its 2000 years old caves which the Buddhist people built and lived there. Kanheri is the elevated portion of the park and those caves are located on the top of it, from the most top of the Kanheri caves we could get this beautiful view of Mumbai, it was breathtaking scenery. We took 2 hrs for exploring the Kanheri caves maybe more. We took off from there after 2p.m.

Then our next mission was to go to the Mumbai central to find a stay for the night and visit our next destinations. We reached there in the evening and found ourselves a lodge for the stay near the Mumbai central railway station. We checked in for a dorm room then they gave us 2 beds and shelf access to put our things in then we freshened up, to get ready for our next mission which was to see the marine drive and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus. We decided to go marine drive first and from there to CST. So we bagged a camera and took some money then we hit the road to marine drive on foot. We walked about 4.5 km and we reached there in an hour. All the way to marine drive was really crowded and even more when we got there, fortunately, we got to see the sunset at the marine drive, it was really beautiful then we stayed there for a while until dark.



After the sunset we head to CST, had walked 2 km and we got there before 8p.m. CST is the most beautiful railway station that I've ever seen. One of the oldest railway stations in Indian history, it looked beautiful like a grand hotel, the interior was quite marvelous, it made us feel like we were somewhere in Europe. History says that the construction started in the year 1878. It took around ten years to complete the building. Once known as 'Victoria Terminus', Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus is a heritage site considered to be a landmark in the station architecture all around the globe. This terminus, designed by FW Stevens, is a lovely blend of western and eastern architecture at its best. And is one of the UNESCO world heritage sites in India.

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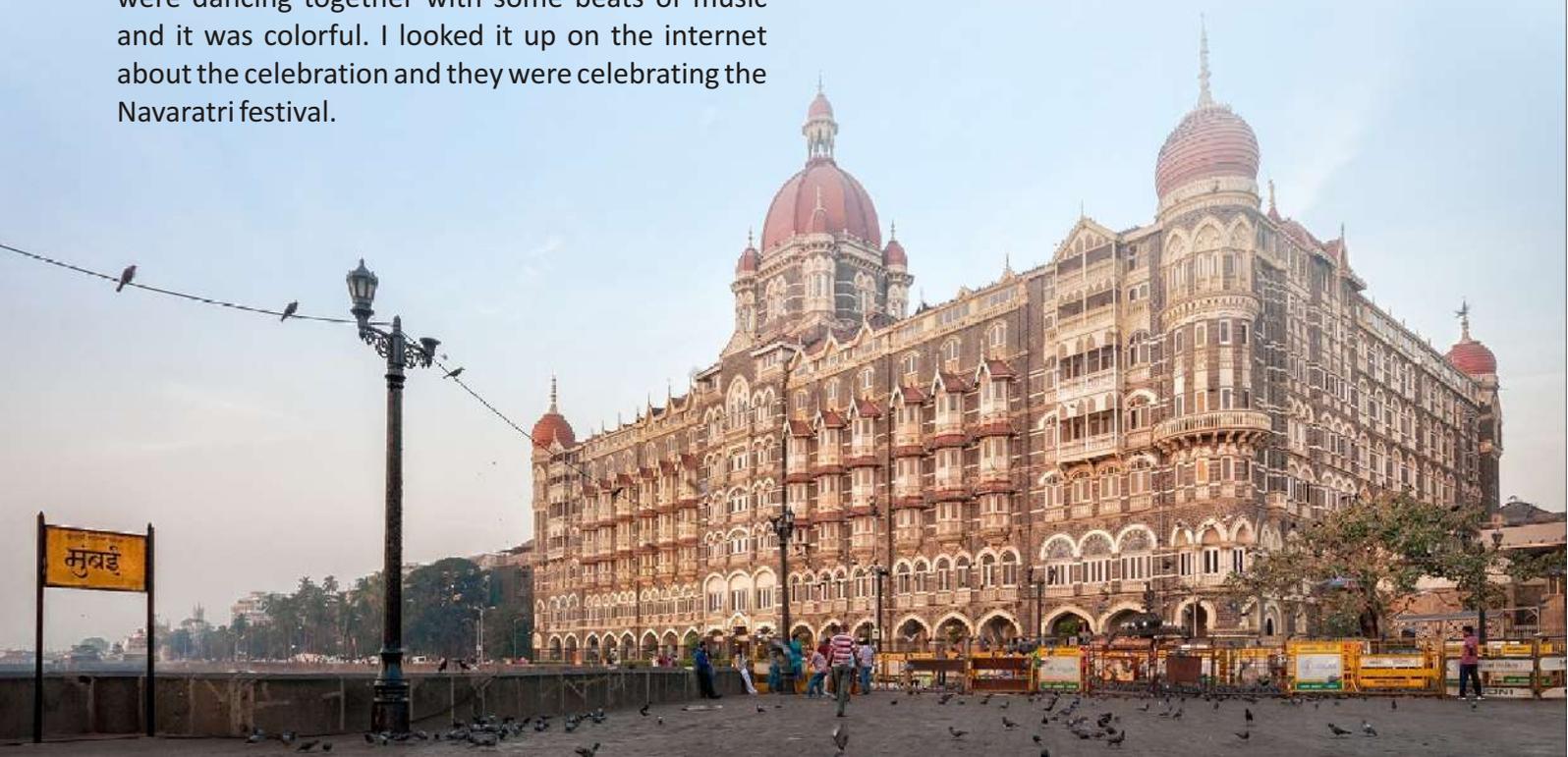
Elephanta caves were our next and last destination. So we went to the ferry to get the tickets for Elephanta caves. The day was Monday, Unfortunately, we didn't know that the Elephanta caves always closed every Monday, we found out that when we asked for tickets. We were so disappointed and we thought about going somewhere else but then we heard that boats were going to Elephanta island, so we decided to go and bought tickets worth 150rs per person. It was a long ride that took about an hour or more to reach the shore. It was a huge island, definitely looked like an elephant's back. There were a lot of people including the locals who live there. From the boat landing stage on the island, a walkway leads to steps that go up to the famous caves. There is also a narrow-gauge huge toy train from the boat area on the dock to the base of the steps leading up to the caves. Lots of interesting things were there to see. Along the path, the local people were selling souvenirs like necklaces, anklets, showpieces, and keychains. There were also stalls to buy food and drinks. Small monkeys were playing along the sides of the path, occasionally thieving items from the locals and tourists.



There were lots of attractions and things to do there that we didn't know. Elephanta caves for one is one of the UNESCO world heritage sites in India. There were a lot of caves that contained rock-cut sculptures that show syncretism of Hindu and Buddhist ideas and iconography. We were in despair of not being able to see the Elephanta Caves so we tried to explore what's out there left to see. We saw some people moving towards the top of that island so we got curious and followed the trail. It was a long walk, most of the people got tired while climbing to the top and headed back mostly because of the hot humid weather but we kept moving. Then we reached near a large gun or some sort of cannon placed on a viewpoint and found out that the location was called the Gun Hill, almost took 20mins to get there. We stayed there for a little while enjoying the beautiful view.

After that, we were ready to head back but some people were going towards the top. So we didn't bother to go a little further but it took us another 10 minutes to reach the top. It was worth going up there, we got to see this magnificent view of the city and it was an awesome experience. So after that, we headed back to the shore to catch a boat and we returned to the gateway of India by evening. We thought our scheduled journey was ended right there but we still had more time to kill, so we decided to eat some food and plan for our next move. So we began with the famous Colaba street, walked through the street towards the Navi Nagar and from there we walked to Nariman point, on our way there we saw some kind of celebration. People were dancing together with some beats of music and it was colorful. I looked it up on the internet about the celebration and they were celebrating the Navaratri festival.

The Navaratri festival is basically a celebration of nine nights. However, Navratri is not just about coming together and dancing to the beats of the music. It also symbolizes the nine forms of Goddess Durga and the beginning of the autumn season in India say on the internet. It was really beautiful to watch so we enjoyed it for a while. And then we finally got ready to leave the place so we walked to the Church gate station to catch the train. We reached there by midnight and we waited at the counter to buy the tickets as soon as we got there because we were tired and didn't want to sleep at the station. Unfortunately, there wasn't any train designated to Ernakulam. But they said that there's a train going to Madgaon railway station and we could catch an Ernakulam train from there. So we bought the tickets and waited for the train. The train arrived at 4a.m. and then we got on the train. We got the seats and slept there for a while. We were exhausted so we didn't enjoy the return. We reached Madgaon by evening and everything else just worked out. On our way back we surprisedly saw the same people who we met on the first day of our journey. At last, we reached home by morning. The trip was a memorable one like the one that I have never done before. For one reason I will never forget about this trip because it is the journey that I walked most. From this journey, I confidently believe that it doesn't matter if you are poor or rich, all that matters is to know that you're doing what makes you feel good, not for others. And I thank my friend for this journey.





ARTICLE ON MATSYAFED AQUA TOURISM NJARAKKAL



Author
Ashna Joshy

Njarakkal, a fish farm turned eco-tourism hub in the heart of Vypin is the center of backwater tourism in Kochi. The place is surrounded by rippling waters where fish are in plenty. The fresh catch of the day is presented alongside hearty dinners. A gentle breeze blows from the sea just around the corner. The scenic Njarakkal Aqua Tourism Centre in Vypin, Kochi is a good destination for a day-long family outing.

In Kerala, Aqua tourism plays a crucial role because of its vast array of water bodies rich in fish. By the Aqua Tourism, tourists can enjoy their vacations by different water rides and kinds of seafood. The environment of Kerala offers several good recreational activities by the side of lakes and backwaters while they are holidaying in this tourist spot. The concept of Aqua tourism has been started to provide the necessary attention to prevent the disappearance of aquatic species. Aqua tourism is considered as a part of eco-tourism with the objective of help to safeguard the aquatic diversity, richness, potential of aqua species in a special area and the effective management and utilization of them for sustainable tours in Kerala.

Responsible Aqua tourism is considered one of the fastest-growing tourism sectors in the world. Angling, or the sport of catching fish with a hook and line, is a major component of Aqua tourism. Some fishes are looked for their value as food, others are pursued by their fighting abilities or the problem of pursuit. Angling for recreation in Kerala is more or less restricted to the high range. The fishes used are principally trouts and mahseer. Though there is a very good scope, Kerala has paid little attention to the development of recreational fisheries, in midland and the coastal regions.

The Aqua Tourism Centre around the fish farm at Njarakkal is run by Matsyafed. Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) made a study on gender mainstreaming and the impact of Self Help Groups by mobilized women in Aquatourism venture in Njarakkal and Malipuram in Vypin Island in Ernakulam district of Kerala state. The 'Matsyafed' of the Kerala State Fisheries Department and the Tsunami Emergency Assistance Program (TEAP) have organised these women self-help groups (SHGs) in Vypin Island in the Ernakulam district of Kerala state for uplifting the lives of Fisherfolk by enhancing Fish production, marketing, technical support, and ecotourism. The cafeteria is maintained by SHGs named Souparnika in Narakkal and Vandanam in Malipuram, and it serves great home-made meals including cooked seafood.

The impact of SHGs on gender mainstreaming by assessing the equity and equality of men and women in these SHGs was assessed through gender analysis, the performance level of SHG, Empowerment Index, and economic feasibility analysis with socio-economic surveys undertaken in the locality with a pre-tested and structured data gathering protocols consisting of standardized scales and indices.

The Empowerment Index was calculated using eight key dimensions. Male and female family members were interviewed individually to examine gender mainstreaming features such as equity and equality in resource access, participation profile, decision-making aspects, gender need analysis, and so on.

For better results, proper "technical training" and "commercial factors" were discovered to be necessary. Female counterparts have an important role in site selection, accessory purchases, cooking, serving, cleaning, marketing, and so on. The 'Performance Assessment' and 'Empowerment Index' scales established for this study have a lot of potential for long-term usage in other crucial areas. Lacunae discovered during the Empowerment Index calculation provide sufficient input to authorities, allowing them to go in the proper direction. The gender crucial issues like women fisher folk's rights and marketing channels for policies and other interventions on gender. Interrelationships between the variables act as catalytic points for group action and group empowerment on a sustainable basis. The explained success case study can be used as a case model and practical handbook for fostering group

In the middle of the fish farm, there are two bamboo cottages. Boats are used to get to these huts. Many travellers like to spend their days relaxing in these huts, soaking up the tranquil atmosphere. Besides these bamboo huts, there are three houses by the boat wharf.

The food supply to tourists is managed by the seafood restaurant run by a women's self-help group selected under the Tsunami Emergency Assistance Project of the Department of Fisheries, Govt. of Kerala. Special fish dishes like Karimeen pollichathu, fish molly, crab roast, prawn masala, etc are available in the restaurant at a reasonable rate.

Tourists can relax in hammocks under the shade of coconut palm leaves or in huts and benches built on the sides of fish ponds. Tourists can witness sunset at Arattuvazhy beach which is just a walkable distance of 200 meters away

It's the perfect place to soak up the sights and sounds of Kerala's diverse culture while relaxing in a hammock and sipping soft coconuts against the backdrop of the pure beauty of the tropical backwaters.

Three ponds near Arattuvazhy beach include 36 acres and are home to a variety of fish, including Pearl spots [karimeen], Kerala's state fish, Poomeen [milk fish], and others. Here the visitors are given a chance to try their luck in fishing and can take their catch home, upon payment.



Food, drinks, and recreational fishing are all included in the farm's packages. A significant draw is a lunch, which consists of a variety of fish dishes served in a floating bamboo hut in the center of one of the ponds.

Kuttavanchi [coracle ride], rowing boat, pedal boat, water cycle, kayaking, and solar boat are among the recreational boating options available at the farm.

Another attraction here is the traditional water drawing wheel used by farmers. Hammocks and huts are provided on pond bunds as well as in mangrove forests. Tourists can enjoy the whistling sound of birds in mangrove forests.

Tourists can also go speed boating and see fish jumping at the farm's north block for a special cost of Rs.50 per person. It is a marvelous experience. A canal safari in the boat is also arranged for a backwater cruise which is having a rich greenery ambiance.

The entrance fee to the Aqua Tourism Centre for adults on weekdays is Rs.250/- and for children below 12 years, it is Rs.200/-. No entry fee for children below 5 years. An evening visit costs only Rs.25/- from 4pm to 6pm. The entry fee includes a single tea/coffee, lunch with fish curry meals, and ice cream.

Njarakkal Aqua Tourism is a wonderful retreat destination for travellers due to its friendliness and range of packages. Aqua Tourism hub is located around 20kms from Kochi, the Queen of Arabian sea.

Other Family Packages Of Njarakkal:-

Bamboo Hut

Located in the middle of the water. Can accommodate 10 persons at a time. Lunch & Evening snacks will be served in the Hut. Besides Speed boat (Fish Jumping), Coracle (Kuttavanchi) Rowing Boat, Pedal Boat, Angling, etc are free in this package. Extra charges for Water cycling & Kayaking

For adults in Bamboo Hut for a full day on working days is Rs.500/- and for the children between the age of 5 to 12 years charge Rs 250/-. In the case of holidays adults, the charge is Rs 550/- and children need to pay 300 for utilizing these services.

Bamboo Hut half day price during working days is Rs.250/- for adults and Rs. 100/- for children between the age of 5 to 12 years. During holidays half-day charge will be Rs. 300/- for adults and Rs. 250/- for children. The children below the age of 5 years are provided free entry to the farm.

Vanchithuruthile Erumadam

Located in the middle of a water Boat-shaped island and a treetop house (Erumadam) is installed in it. A dining table, Benches, Swing, etc is placed inside the Vanchithuruth. Food will be served in the thuruth can accommodate 15 persons at a time. Water Cycling, Kayaking, Coracle (Kuttavanchi), Rowing boat, Pedal boat Angling, etc are free in this package..





ARTICLE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT



Author
Alphin Thomas

When I travelled across such places I have always wondered why a certain tourist area was always supported. Sustainable tourism is attracting a lot of attention today worldwide. Travel is a feeling for tourists traveling from one place to another for their enjoyment. It is therefore the responsibility of each individual to maintain the environment and to enrich the community. This document explores the importance and sustainability of the tourism industry. It can be defined as development that meets current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It is the practice of preserving a product by adding resources without compromising or endangering the biological system. It focuses heavily on the conservation of Nature. Sustainable development has four pillars:

- Social
- Man
- Economics
- Environment



In the name of economic development, the price of environmental damage is paid in the form of land degradation, soil erosion, air pollution, water pollution, and deforestation. All institutions have their consolation to accomplish their establishment. As resilience is also; Promoting the kind of development that reduces environmental problems and Meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising on the natural quality of future generations.

It can be achieved by blocking human activities such as Technology Development, overuse of natural resources, etc. All types of pollution should be minimized. The environment is ideal as soon as resource extraction remains below the production level of resources. Waste production remains within the natural environment. To ensure that these levels of sustainability we need better education in Sustainable Tourism. As I said Education for Sustainable Development empowers students of all ages with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to tackle the connected global challenges we face, including climate change, environmental degradation, environmental loss, poverty, and inequality. Learning should prepare information for all ages to find solutions to today's and future challenges. Education must transform and allow us to make informed decisions and take individual and collective action to change our communities and care for the world.

Sustainable Development Education is a lifelong learning process and is an integral part of quality education. Speaking of sustainable tourism, I want to talk about the responsibilities and steps that visitors need to take. I have traveled a lot since my childhood, with my family, friends, relatives, etc. There are examples of regions that rely on tourists to drive their economy. To reduce the negative impacts and pollution caused by tourism activities, the concepts of eco-tourism and nature tourism emerged. Sustainable tourism goes one step further and makes tourism more sustainable naturally over time. It focuses on the conservation of natural resources and the conservation and appreciation of several local cultures, traditions, and cultural heritage.

While both ecotourism and sustainable tourism may be seen as synonymous, Ecotourism aims at environmentally friendly tourism to improve the lives of people and not harming the environment, and sustainable tourism is much broader and includes many aspects of tourism itself. The activities of both of them are very similar. Visitors are like a local person visiting a place. When a local person breaks the law, visitors quickly respond to him because he thinks that if the local people can do it, I can do it too in a holistic way to enrich society and the environment.



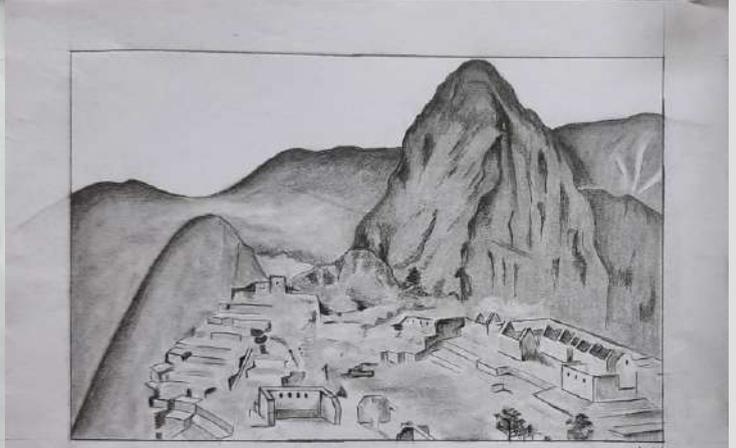
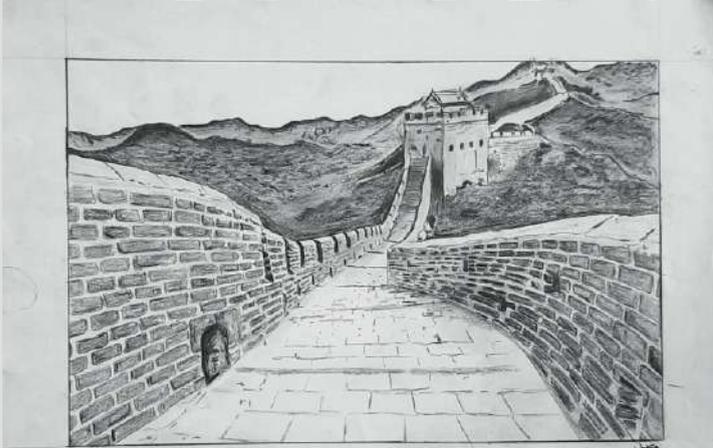
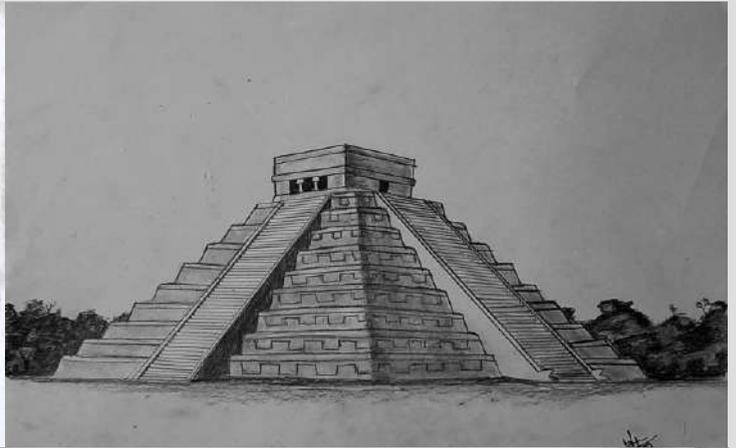
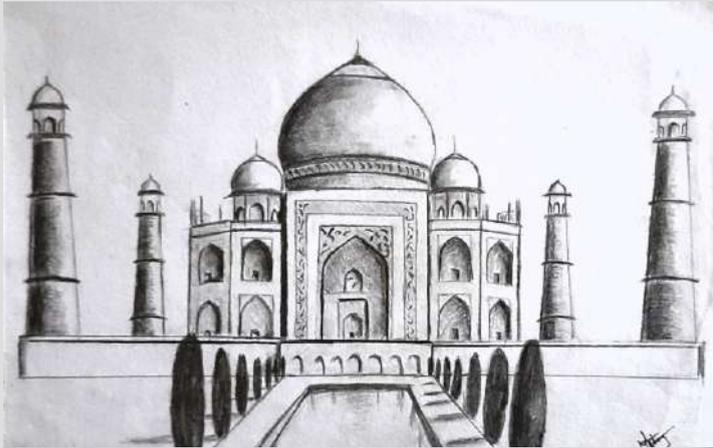


ARTIST STATION



Artist
Melvin Antony

SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD



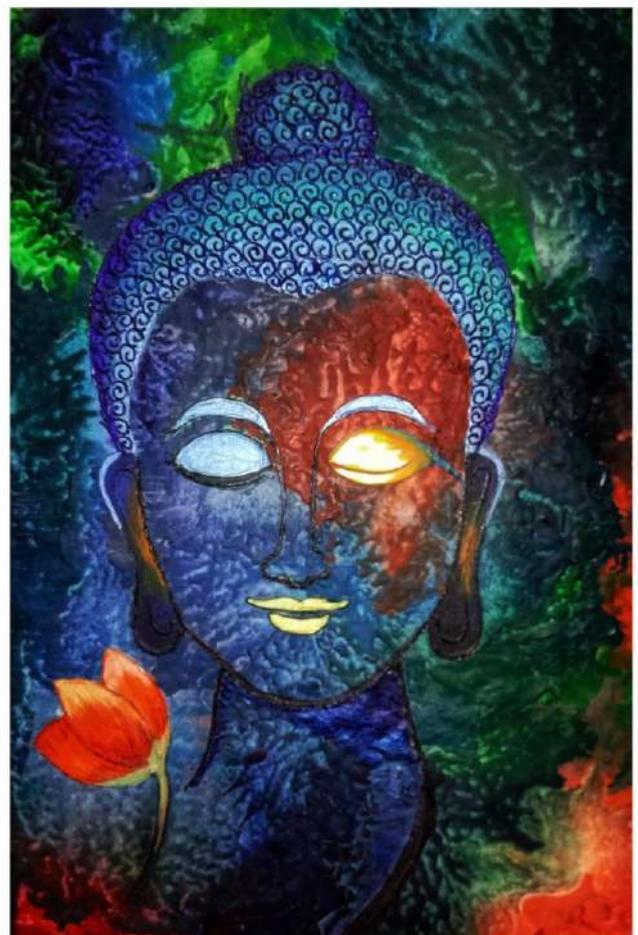


ARTIST STATION

“LIFE CAN ALWAYS BE EXPLAINED BY AN ART”



Arist:
Alan Antony Saju

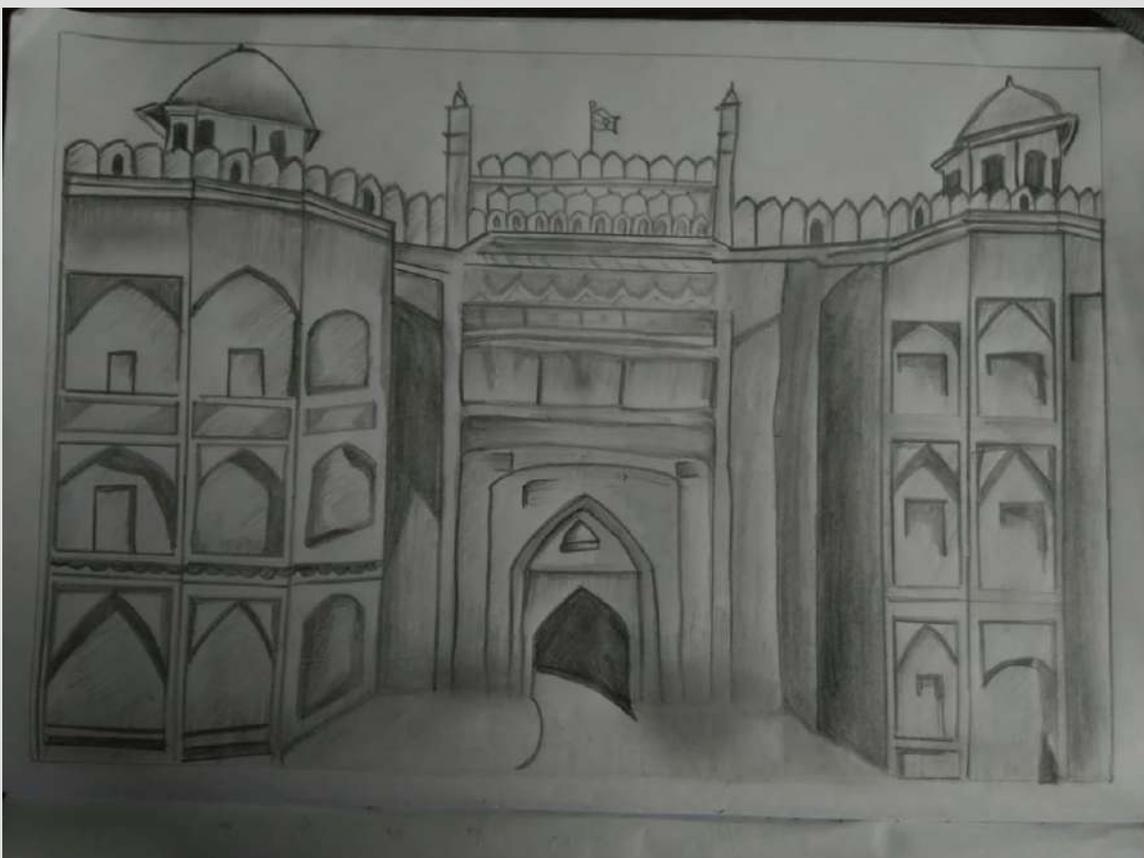




"LIFE CAN ALWAYS BE EXPLAINED BY AN ART"

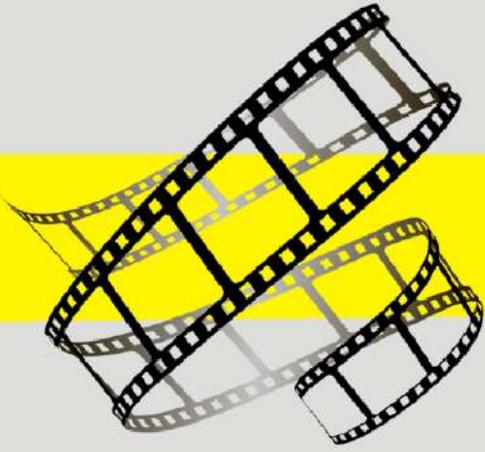


Artist:
Alan Antony Saju



Artist:
Catherin Nayomi

RED FORT



PHOTOBLOG



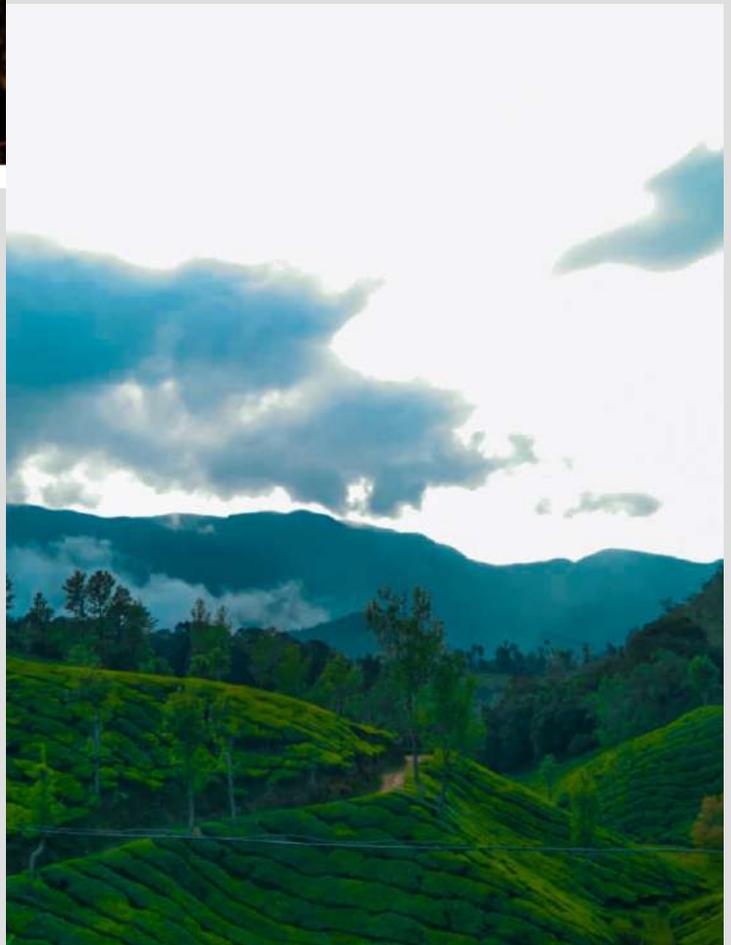
The butterfly is a flying flower
The flower a tethered butterfly

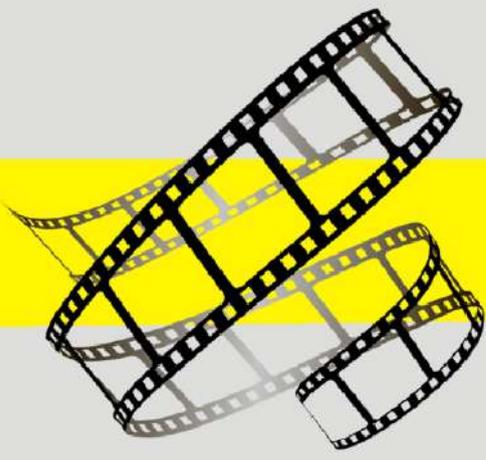
Photo courtesy by : **Amal Antony**



Trees are the Earth's endless
effort to speak to the listening heaven.
Beautiful view of Devikulam, Munnar.

Photo courtesy by : **Catherin Nayomi**





PHOTOBLOG



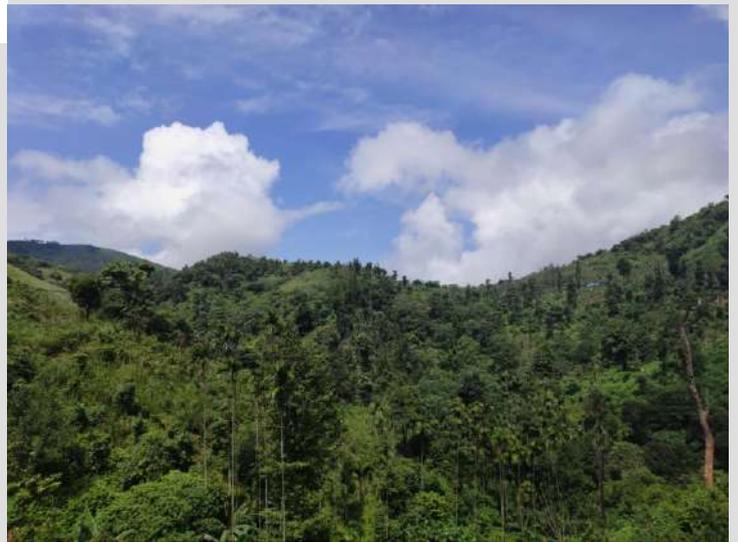
"Every sunset brings the promise of a new dawn".
A view of Kadamakkudy.

Photo courtesy by : **Jazar O N**



"The soul of a landscape,
the spirits of the elements, the genius of
every place will be revealed
to a loving view of nature". A view of Attapady

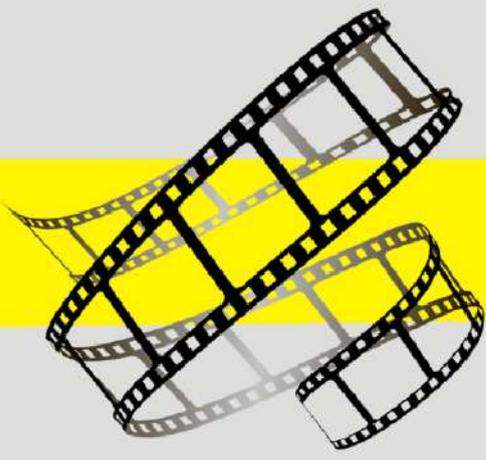
Photo courtesy by: **Amitha Babu**



Utsavam, folklore festivals depict the
culture and tradition of our nation.

Photo courtesy by **Rohith Chandran**



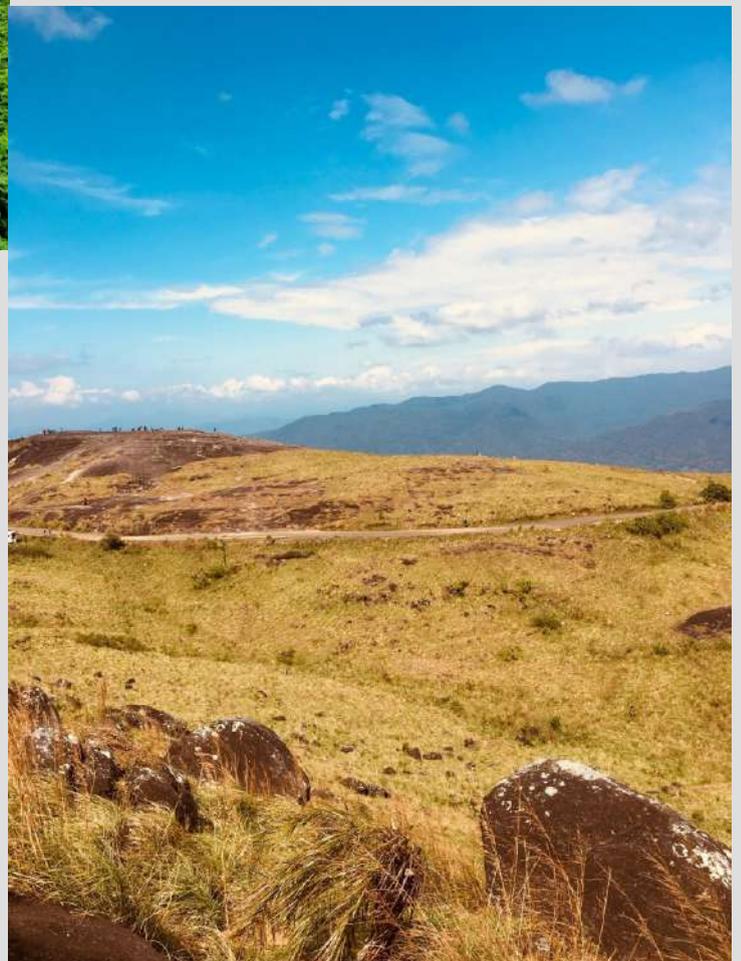


PHOTOBLOG



Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.
Mindblowing view of Munnar

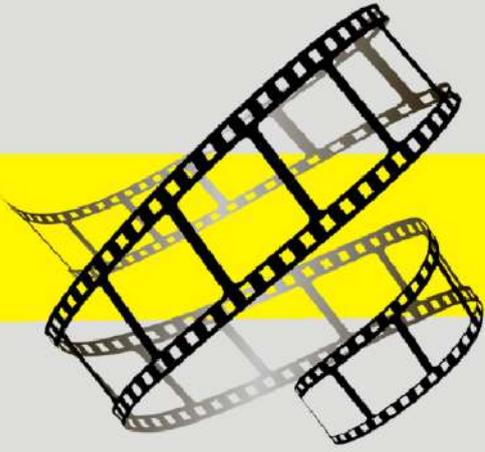
Photo courtesy by: **Tony Sebastian**



Go where you feel most alive.
A view from Ponmudi

Photo courtesy by **Ashna Joshy**





PHOTOBLOG



"Architecture should speak of its time and place, but yearn for timelessness"
At Mattanchery

Photo courtesy by : **Rohith Chandrashekar**

