

WESTERN GHATS EXPLORER

This programme is so well designed by our Naturalist Mr Benny Kurien who is an authority on Western Ghats and published many books on the Western Ghats. The main attraction is that Mr Benny Kurien will be accompanying the group to give the best experience and knowledge.

Mountain ranges of the Western Ghats run parallel to the west coast of India from north at Tapti river to Cape Comerin at South and extended to Srilanka after a gap. The Western Ghat mountains are continuous approximately to a distance of 1500 kms. The mountains are believed to be a part of the ancient Gondwanaland. The archeological sites of the Ghats give us a clear picture of the South Indian ethnology and civilization. The Shola forests known as the living fossils are the home for many of the ancient species trace back to the Gondwana land.

Western Ghats Explorer is to provide you the best in wildlife, adventure, bird watching, trekking experience in a distinctively different way. This programme spreads over Kerala, Tamilnadu and Karnataka in South India.

Day 01 - Cochin



On arrival at Cochin, you will be met by our meet & greet service and transferred to hotel. After check in you will meet our naturalist who will give you an introduction to what you can expect on your experience and answer any questions you may have. Our ground representative will also be on hand to explain ground arrangements etc. Rest of the day go for shopping or just explore the city at your own pace accompanied by our driver. Evening, enjoy a fusion of traditional dance forms of Kerala at a

cultural center in Cochin. Overnight at the hotel for a well deserved rest.

A leisurely walk through the Fort Cochin area which gives you a close look at the operation of the huge cantilevered Chinese fishing nets, low flying terns and black kites, if lucky you can spot dolphins in the estuary.

Day 02 – Cochin

Morning, after breakfast, proceed for a *village backwater Cruise* with lunch. Afternoon back to Cochin. Afternoon enjoy the sightseeing of Cochin. Overnight at the Hotel.

Village backwater Cruise - A four hour journey in a country boat into the pristine purity of a typical village backwater of Kerala.... goes through the zigzagging narrow canals and paddy fields fringed with coconut palms.....watch rare birds....country boat making....a natural fish farm where you can go fishing...

Cochin Sightseeing - *St Francis Church*, built in 1510 by friars brought to India by Vasco da Gama, is the first European church built in India and is the site where *Vasco da Gama* was buried. The *Jewish Synagogue* was built in 1568, Chinese hand-painted tiles are one of the attraction. This, the only Synagogue in India has a nostalgic past of a Jewish Diaspora. The "*Dutch Palace*" was built in the 1550s; the palace contains excellent mythological murals and a rare example of traditional Keralite flooring - a subtle mix of burnt coconut shells, lime, plant juices and egg whites - which gives the effect of polished marble.



Day 03 - Cochin – Munnar (140kms-4 hours drive)

After breakfast, proceed to Munnar through the Midland farms like Rubber, tuber crops, pineapple, vanilla etc. Enroute, visit *Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary*. Lunch at Thattekkad. On arrival at Munnar, check in at the Hotel & later proceed for a short sightseeing tour.

Overnight stay at Munnar.

Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary, Thattekkad is a home for 280 species of birds including Grey hornbill, White-bellied tree pie, Rufous babbler, Wayanad laughing thrush, etc and a number of water birds.



Munnar is a misty, lush green hill station up in the Anamalai range of Kerala; Munnar's tea gardens, some of the highest in the world, stretch up the sides of the hills and are interspersed with pockets of forest rich in birds. It is situated at the confluence of three mountain streams - Mudrapuzha, Nallathanni and Kundala. Surrounded by almost 30 tea gardens that give it a picturesque view, Munnar is near Anaimudi, the highest peak of the Kerala Western Ghats.

Day 04 - Munnar (Marayoor – 40 km)

After early breakfast at the Hotel, proceed to *Eravikulam National park* to explore the wild life. After the visit proceed to *Marayoor Sandal wood forest Valley*. Check in at the hotel. After lunch visit to a typical village to explore the village activities, soft hike through the sandal wood forest, birding, visit to an ancient cave painting etc. Enjoy the bonfire & overnight stay in Hotel.

Exotic and pristine, Marayoor is a unique place where tourism meets adventure. The enchanting beauty of Marayoor offers diversity in every aspect of the land and culture. Hamlets, rocky hills, rivers, brooks, cave temples, paddy and sugar cane fields, waterfalls, sandal wood and bamboo forests...Marayoor is famous for its natural sandalwood forests grown in natural abundance. Marayoor is the only place in Kerala where natural sandalwood forest is seen. Chinnar wild sanctuary is the haven for two highly endangered species-the grizzled giant squirrel and the star tortoise.



Day 05 – Munnar – Indira Gandhi National Park (Topslip) - 70 kms

After breakfast, check out from the Hotel & proceed to Chinnar. On arrival, stay in a village farm forest hosted by a Landlord of the area. Visit to *Indira Gandhi National Park*. Hike through the sanctuary. Later proceed to Anamalai through Tamil Nadu Villages. Overnight at the resort.



As you go on the nature trail in Chinnar, you are bound to come across a fascinating plethora of bird and animal life. In your journey to Anamalai, you will touch the main land again but on the eastern side of the Western Ghats. On the way you can see an entirely different way of village life from Kerala. The vast expanse of hundreds of crops, sacred groves, termite mount temples and if in season, can participate in a village festival like fire walk, Jelly Kettu (Bullfight) etc.

Day 06 - Indira Gandhi National Park (Topslip)

Full day to discover the wilderness of Anamalai Hills. Trek to *Kariyanchola National Park*. Enjoy an evening safari through the moist deciduous forest to spot animals. Overnight stay at the resort.



Kariyanchola National Park - a unique wet evergreen primary forest having high density of endemic plants, reptiles and amphibians. It harbors 14 out of the 16 Western Ghats endemics. Anamalai Hills, a range of mountains in southern India, a portion of the Western Ghats, after this range has been broken by the Palghat Pass, south of the Nilgiris. They really consist of a forest-clad and grassy tableland, with summits rising about 8000 ft.

Day 07 – Ooty(Tamilnadu)

After breakfast, proceed to Ooty through *the Mountain train* (heritage steam engine). You will board the Blue Mountain Train from Mettupalayam to Ooty - An amazing climb from 700 MSL to 2000 MSL. On arrival, check in at the Hotel. After lunch, visit to *Botanical Garden* and around. Overnight at Ooty.

The journey to Ooty has to cross the biggest gap in the mountains which separate Anamalai (Elephant Hills) and Nilgiris (Blue Mountains). Ooty stands at 7,347 feet above sea level in the Nilgiri mountain range. The landscape is marked by rolling hills covered with dense vegetation, smaller hills and plateaus covered with tea gardens, and eucalyptus trees. Many portions of the hills are preserved as natural reserve forests.



Day 08 - Ooty

Full day to explore the scenic beauty of Ooty. Overnight at the Hotel.

The "Queen of hill stations", is the capital of Nilgiri district. Nilgiri means "Blue Mountains". Situated at an altitude of 2,240 meters above sea level, it is a land of picturesque picnic spots. Lofty mountains, dense forest, sprawling grasslands and miles and miles of tea gardens greet the passengers on most routes.



Day 09 – Masinagudi(70 kms-3 hours drive)

Morning, proceed to Masinagudi; on arrival, check in at the Hotel and later explore the wildlife of the area through safaris and hikes. Later proceed for *Bandipur* visit. Overnight at the Hotel at Masinagudi.



The Bandipur National Park is one of the most fascinating wildlife centers, nestled in the foothills of the Nilgiri. As you penetrate deep into the forests, you can almost hear the mute conversations between the animals and the trees. There's a lot, lot more to discover. Peafowl, partridges, quail, hornbill, giant squirrel, dhole (wild dog) elephants, sambhar, barking deer, etc. An endless variety of wildlife flourishes here and the trees sheltering them are even or beautiful.

Day 10 - Mysore (60kms-2 hours drive)

After breakfast, drive to Mysore, in the State of Karnataka, the city of palaces. On arrival check in at the Hotel. Later proceed for sightseeing. Overnight at the Hotel.

Mysore, an undulating tableland, covered in parts by granite outcrops and fringed by verdant forests, offering several attractions ranging from the royal splendor of Mysore City and its fabulous Dasara Festival to exquisite temples, pilgrimage centres and scenic spots. Visit the palace of the Maharaja built in 1911-12. The palace is of harmonious syntheses of the Hindu and Saracenic styles of architecture with archways, domes, turrets, colonnades and sculptures which are magnificent.



Day 11 – Mysore

Full day to explore the cultural heritage of Mysore city. Visit to *Rangathittu Bird Sanctuary*. Overnight at the Hotel.



Rangathittu, lush green islands on the river Cauvery, are home for an astonishing variety of migratory birds from as far away as Siberia - Spoon bills, Open Bill Stork, White Ibis, Little Egret, Darter, Pond Heron, Cattle Egret, Cormorant, Wild Duck, Peafowl. The only sounds are the cries of birds; swoosh of wings and the ripple of water.

Day 12 - Kabini (50 kms-1.5 hours drive)

Morning, proceed to Kabini. On arrival, check in at the Hotel. Rest of the day to discover the wildlife. Overnight at the Hotel.

Nestled amidst the Karapur Forest lays a pristine piece of land that abounds with nature. Beckoning you to explore it for a wild exciting holiday. The steep valleys with rich forests, spectacular pools and rapids provide an ideal opportunity to revive your adventurous spirits.



Day 13 – Kabini

Full day at Kabini for jungle activities like guided safaris and free walks. Overnight at the Hotel.



The jungle activities are organized by the jungle resorts with proper safari jeeps and escorting rangers takes you deep into the forest. Perhaps nowhere else in India can one see so much of wildlife. Sighting of elephants, sambhar, spotted deer, gaur, wild boar, sloth bear, wild dogs, etc., are almost assured, while if one is lucky, a tiger or a panther too, could be sighted. Our clients are permitted to shoot, not with guns but with camera and video. The sighting of wildlife in their

eco-system creates awareness and respect among the humans towards other life forms.

Day 14 – Vythiri

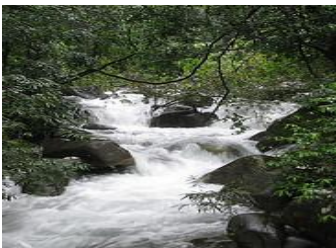
By morning, proceed to Vythiri Resorts.(100 kms-4 hours Drive) Rest of the time free at the resort to enjoy the amenities of the resort. Overnight at the resort.



The Vythiri resort is located in the forested highlands of Kerala. Living in the midst of nature, it's not difficult to actually fall in love with it. At Vythiri, the entire philosophy revolves around this undying love. No trees have ever been cut to make way for the resort. Even the rocks and boulders have been left in peace and the animals around the resort, undisturbed.

Day 15 – Vythiri

Full day enjoy the activities at the resort. Overnight at the resort.



The cottages and huts are in the ethnic styles. Taking you back to an indigenous "tribal village" where simplicity and harmony reigned supreme. The climate is mildly cool, just fine - neither too cold, nor warm. Vythiri's unique geographical features lend a peculiar charm and a delightful challenge to trekkers and nature freaks. Its fascinating scenery and wonderful climate creates an unforgettable experience.

Day 16 – Vythiri – Cochin

Morning, drive to Cochin.(280 kms-6-7 Hours drive) On arrival, check in at the Hotel. Rest of the day free for leisure. Evening, enjoy Kathakali, the *traditional dance show* of Kerala. Overnight at the Hotel.

Cochin the queen of the Arabian Sea is one of the most interesting cities of India and has one of the finest natural harbors in the world. A root-conscious people of Kerala have preserved their past not only in the form of history books but also in the form of monuments and palaces. Places, palaces and institutions of historic value are being preserved conscientiously.



Day 17 – Departure

Like all good things, your holiday experience comes to an end but you will always take with you memories of this unique and unforgettable experience. Transfer to Cochin International Airport for your flight home.



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