

A Heaven Away From



Natural beauty in abundance.

George Joseph

Peermade is a small beautiful plantation town located to the south of the Idukki district. Blessed by the fragrance of cardamom and spices, the beautiful green mountains crowned with mist make the place an ideal spot for a visit. The place got its name from the name of a Sufi saint called Peer Mohammad. The meaning of the word Peermade is 'the Hill

of Peer'. The famous tourist destinations namely Thekkady and Vagamon are very near to Peermade.

The place is known as Kerala's Own Ooty. It stands at an altitude of more than 1000 meters above the sea level. The climate is always pleasant here. The place is ideal for adventure sports like mountaineering, trekking and cycling. Now sophisticated sports like paragliding too is done here. The second highest peak of south India is located

here, after the one at Munnar called Anamudi. The main attractions here include tea plantations, viewpoints, waterfalls, architectural wonders etc. So the next time you plan your outing, include Peermade. Get yourselves relaxed by the breathtaking sights of huge mountains, waterfalls, lakes and much more.

The place was covered by thick forests before a hundred years; the only community who lived here were the wild

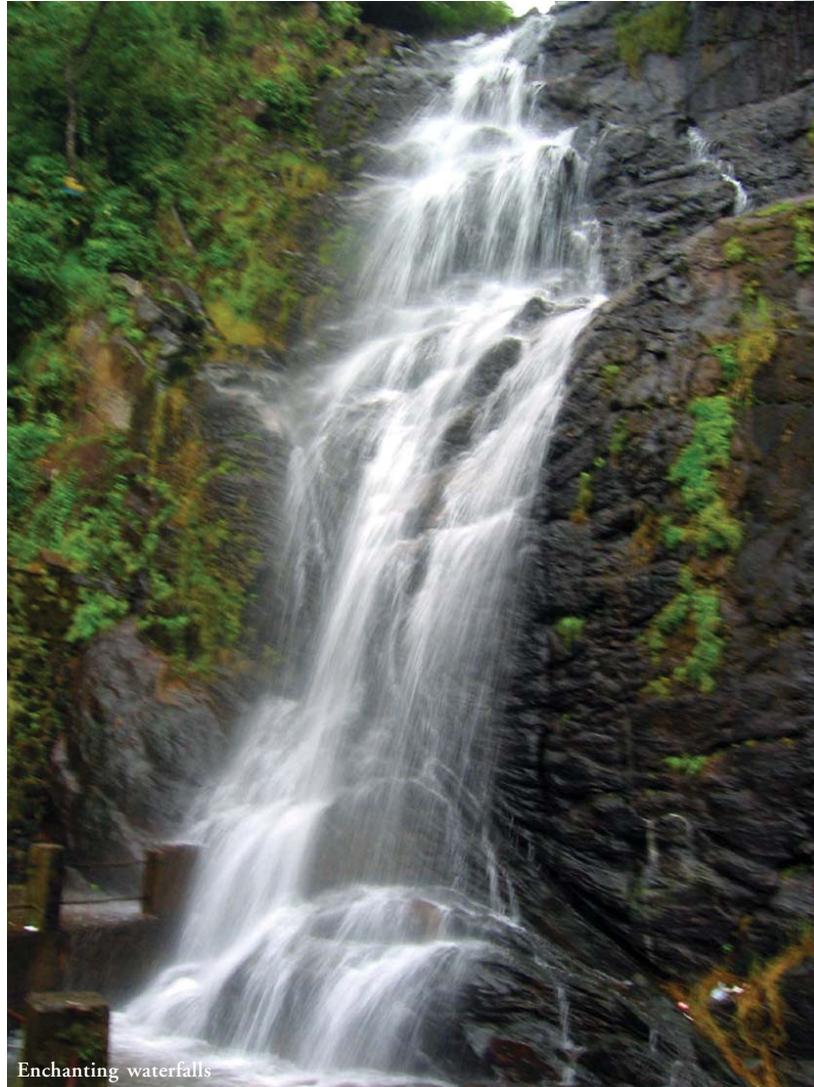
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animals and the tribal. Archaeologists have found that people have been living here even during the very ancient time. It was found that the hills were once colonized by Neolithic people. Though there are not many written records for this, traces of their cultural remains can still be seen often along the hills.

The whole work of transforming these hills to a human adaptable environment was done under a CMS missionary namely Henry Baker who belonged to the Baker family of England, chiefly known for their contributions in the field of education. He used to visit the foothills of this place called Mundakayam on the request of the tribal people uphill, for uplifting their community. Henry Baker was a strong adventurous man. He loved travelling through the jungles

Flora and Fauna



Enchanting waterfalls

and he used to visit the tribal colonies uphill. He loved the place very much, and that resulted into the very idea of transforming the hills into plantations. He started plantations with the grants which he got from his family in England. Soon many people were required to work in the plantations and they were brought from Tamil Nadu.

The first plantation which was tried was coffee with the seeds brought from Wayanad. But soon there was a trouble; the coffee plantations were affected by a leaf disease, called Hemalia Vextratix, by which the leaf turns to dark colour and dries up and so the coffee were abandoned. Just after that tea was cultivated



experimentally in about 10 acres. Tea bush was brought to Peermade from Nilgiris. As it was a grand success tea plantations were done all around Peermade, and even now tea remains to hold the major plantation share.

Later, many others including J.J Murphy and Richardson followed him and started plantation estates, and soon the whole area became an active plantation belt. As more and more people were required to work in these plantations, more and more people were bought from the plains. At that time there being no roads, bullock carts were used to carry goods. Sometimes they were carried as head loads to Mundakayam and by motor vehicles to Kottayam and to England via ship.

In 1912, there was a long rainy season which induced landslides killing a large number of people. The living condition of the people here was very bad, as they had to work for about twelve hours a day, and there were no medical facilities.

Walking along the steep curved roads

surrounded by beautiful tea plantations itself is relief to our mind. Waterfalls at Valangankanam, which falls from a height of about 75 meters to the roadside is exciting. It is very lovely to spend here watching the beauty of the falls and the hills nearby. It is about eight kilometres away from Peermade. To enjoy the most out of a visit, you must move by foot or a cycle.

Hills and viewpoints: Trishanku hills, which is just four kilometres away from Peermade, at Kuttikkanam, is a land mass entirely covered by green grass. The greatest of all is the spectacular sunset. It was said that earlier the places up to the coastal region like Alapuzha was visible from here.

Amrthamedu, the second highest peak of south India, after the Anamudy at Munnar is visible from here. The mount is an ideal point for trekking. Another two main view points are the places called Panchalimedu and Parunthumpara. At Parunthumpara, about 11 kilometres away from Peermade there is a very large stretch of rock surrounded by trenches on three

sides. From here we can get a view of the great holy fire at Sabarimala.

Architecture: One of the architectural marvels here is the Velankanni Matha church located at Pattumala which was about eight kilometres away from Peermade. The whole place is surrounded by beautiful tea gardens and hills. The church is built entirely of granite and was built in the gothic style of architecture.

Many old bungalows built by Europeans are now turned into stay homes. There we get a view of the old European style of architecture with beautifully decorated interiors. There is an old palace, the summer palace of the Travancore Maharajar at Kuttikkanam. Flower garden located at Pattumala is just seven kilometres from Peermade. There are more than a hundred varieties of flowers here shining in vivid colours. Hundreds of tourists arrive here daily mostly to see the flowers, but sometimes to pose with the flowers.

The place is easily reachable. It is on the NH 220. It is just 75 kilometres away from



Wading through tea plantations

Kottayam exactly 9° 35' North 76° 59' East. It is just 36 kilometres away from Thekkady, the famous tourist place. The nearest railway station is at Kottayam. There are buses frequently from Kottayam to this place. Even the roads to this place are very beautiful. The roads to the hill rise from the planes of Malanad (meaning land of hills) of Mundakayam, the town along the foothills. The plantations switch from rubber and paddy at the lowlands to cardamom and tea at the highlands. The major plantations here are tea, but there are others too including spices like pepper, vanilla, cloves, cardamom etc. Fruits and vegetables like cabbage, oranges, strawberry etc are also grown here.

Accomodation

There are many hotels at Kuttikkanam. Also there are more than a dozen of resorts and old bungalow. Most of the hotels take the tourists for an adventurous ride or site seeing.

Peermade is more and more becoming as a centre of education and meditation. More than a dozen of colleges and schools are there near Peermade, in which students from other parts of Kerala and outside Kerala come for studies. Most of the educational institutions are located at Kuttikkanam, which is a plantation town situated four kilometres away from Peermade. ■



ARCHITECTURAL MARVEL- Pattumala Church



WRAPPED IN MIST : the majestic mountains of Peermade