



WILDLIFE & NATURAL HISTORY TOURS

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Explore Kalakad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) - Mundanthurai & Kuduraivetti

Please see <http://travel.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?262065> to read an article, based on an identical guided tour we conducted for Outlook Traveller Magazine to KMTR in Sep 2009

When

May 27th to 31st 2010

(Depart from Chennai on 26th night and arrive back on the 1st morning)

Costs

INR 15,000 (USD 350) per head (for 4 persons traveling, ex- Chennai)

Facilities

Accommodation: Simple forest rest houses with basic facilities

Difficulty: Moderate for walks in mountainous uneven terrain

Food: Simple local vegetarian

Transport: Train transfers in 2nd class A/C coaches. Road transfers in Toyota Qualis or similar.

Highlights

KMTR is located among the southern most ranges (Ashambu Hills) of the Western Ghats and as such, it is the southern most range of some of India's megafauna, including the tiger and elephant. However, KMTR is better appreciated for its biodiversity rich, contiguous tracts of old-growth wet-evergreen forests and stunning, often mystical, mountain scenery. The park contains many biotic treasures including an amazing diversity of flora, herpetofauna, small vertebrates and invertebrates which are often unique to the Western Ghats. KMTR is also a well known centre for plant endemism. Bird diversity, including ecoregion endemics, is excellent, as is typical for other Western Ghats locations with similar habitat diversity. Notably, the rare oriental bay owl, known from very sporadic records from northeast India and the Western Ghats, was recently photographed in the reserve. With us, you will visit a variety of habitat types that occur within KMTR, including the best rainforest locations, grasslands, ri-



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parian, deciduous and dry thorn forests in pursuit of the reserve's impressive biological riches and stunning natural locations.

The tour will be led by an experienced naturalist and the team will be ably guided and supported by the 'Kaani's', an indigenous forest hunter-gatherer tribe who have an intimate knowledge of the reserve's biodiversity and natural locations. An element of ecotourism is built into this tour - by employing the services of the local tribals as support staff we will contribute to their economic well being, consequently reducing their dependence on forest resources for sustenance and providing an economic incentive to conserve the local biodiversity.

Itinerary

Day 1, Chennai: Over night train to Tirunelveli

Day 2, Mundanthurai: After a relaxed breakfast in Tirunelveli, we drive to Mundanthurai and reach around noon. The Mundanthurai plateau's dry thorny, deciduous and riparian forests, contain an interesting cross section of mammalian fauna - including large animals such as the leopard and sloth bear and endemic primates such as the gracefully acrobatic Nilgiri langur. Nocturnal animals including the diminutive slender loris, mouse deer and small Indian civet, are more regularly seen here than in other locations in the Western Ghats. While bird diversity is good, the main attractions here are birds restricted to drier habitats in peninsular India, including the blue-faced malkoha and brown-headed barbet. If time permits, we will also visit an extremely scenic location where the Servalar river flows through forest clad mountains.

Day 3, 4 & 5, Kudiraivetti: Depart from Mundanthurai mid-morning and drive to Kakachi/Upper Kodayar. We spend the next three days exploring the wet forests and grasslands of this area. We enter the reserve virtually in the plains and drive up the mountains through deciduous forests, tea plantations and excellent rainforest, enroute Kudiravetti, our final location, on an open grassland with panoramic views of the surrounding mountainscape. The rainforest at Kakachi (1200m) is classically old-growth, dominated by tall, buttressed trees. Notably, the lion-tailed macaque can be found here and the rainforest abounds with a great diversity of flora and fauna - including rarities such as the brown palm civet and brown mongoose. Late evening in the rainforest here has good potential for flying squirrels, pit-vipers, amphibians and invertebrates. We schedule our visit to coincide with the flowering of the keystone *Cullenia* - a valuable source of food for a number of Western Ghats's rainforest fauna. Bird-life can be excellent in the landscape, including for sightings of magnificent black eagles, rare mountain imperial pigeons and endemics such as the Malabar whistling thrush. In Upper Kodayar we enter a wildlife rich area of grasslands and evergreen forest, where large mammals



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such as elephants and gaur are regularly sighted. We also have a good chance of seeing the Nilgiri Tahr here - a mountain goat endemic to the upper reaches of the Western Ghats. Upper Kodayar has good population of broad-tailed grassbird and potential for white-bellied shortwing - both species endemic to the Western Ghats - in this location.

Day 6, Tirunelveli: After a morning trek in the rainforest and lunch, we depart for Tirunelveli in the afternoon to connect to the overnight train to Chennai. We arrive in Chennai on the morning of the 7th day.

FYI and Guidelines

1. Accommodation will be very basic in both locations, with minimal furnishing and other creature comforts. Although we will be staying in forest department tourist rest houses, we recommend that you pack as though you were out camping, i.e. include your sleeping bags, towels etc into your backpack. We could arrange for your sleeping bags if you let us know in advance.
2. Food will be simple and largely locally available vegetarian fare.
3. Late may likely to have warm, humid days with distinct possibility of evening thunderstorms. Kuduraivetti, at a little over 1000m is likely to have cool nights and we expect that a light pullover will provide sufficient comfort.
4. Please bring your binoculars (at least 8x magnification, ideally 10x). While much of the biodiversity in the park can be enjoyed without a pair of binoculars, they would certainly come in handy for closer observations of fauna that do not allow close approach.
5. A considerable amount of walking around will be involved during this tour. Some of the terrain will be mountainous and uneven. It is essential that you wear a very comfortable pair of trekking shoes and full pants during our forays into the wild. We expect that all tour participants are in good physical condition. Please be advised that we could be up to 3hrs away from the nearest medical facility.
6. A hat and sunblock are highly recommended. We also suggest that you carry insect repellents and anti-allergy creams/medication. Please bring essential medication with you.

Terms and Conditions

1. Tour costs are based on twin/triple sharing basis ex-Chennai and is all inclusive (transport, accommodation, food, personnel and all taxes and fees). Personnel includes one tour guide/naturalist and resource persons from the local community. Please check with us on specific items to make sure if it is included in the published tour costs.
2. Maximum group size on this tour is 4.
3. Bookings are confirmed only upon full payment of the tour cost and at least 15 days in advance from the proposed departure date



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4. We reserve the right to cancel the tour at anytime due to unforeseen circumstances. We will refund the entire booking amount under these circumstances.
5.
 - a. We accept demand drafts in Indian Rupees and online credit card payments in US Dollars through Paypal
 - b. Customers can also transfer funds electronically into our bank accounts (details provided on request). Indian customers can also use a credit card to pay online through Paypal, but please be aware that you will be charged an additional currency conversion fee for the same.
 - c. Demand drafts are payable to “Ficus Wildlife and Natural History Tours” located in Chennai.
6. In case you want to cancel your booking:
 - a. A 90% refund if cancellation requested more than 15 days before the proposed date of departure
 - b. A 15% refund if cancellation requested less than 15 days from the proposed date of departure.

Disclaimer and Emergency Contact

Participants should be aware of unlikely, but potential risks involved during wildlife tours and general travel. This may include, among other things, injuries or fatalities associated with general travel, snake bites, field activities and encounters with wildlife. We require that all tour participants sign this disclaimer that acknowledges the risks associated during our conducted tours and relieves us of any liabilities arising out of the same. This also acknowledges that you have read and abide by the terms and conditions mentioned in the document.

Name of participant:

Age:

Emergency contact person:

Relationship:

Tel no:

Email:

Signature and Date: