

ARALAM

WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

The Northernmost Frontier



God's Own Country

www.keralatourism.org/ecotourism

(Adobe Acrobat Reader recommended for better experience with e-brochure)

A small, light-colored primate with large, round eyes is perched on a thin branch in a dark, dense forest. The primate has a pale face and chest, with darker fur on its head and limbs. It is looking directly at the camera. The background is filled with dark green foliage and branches, creating a sense of being deep within a jungle at night.

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Parallel to the Cheenkanni River, one sees the silence of an ancient behemoth bring under its mystical spell every single being in its vicinity. At Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary, it is the sheer rawness of nature that becomes evident with every step, as we are led upwards on its now famous rocky paths. People in the surrounding regions attest to Aralam being the original fortress that guards the very soul and essence of the land. A few steps in, and the wind itself seems to let you drift slowly into the very heart of this magnificent wildlife sanctuary, home to some of the rarest and most beloved species in all of the Western Ghats.



Geographical Features



When the sun is out and about, people turn to the sanctuary to fulfill any of their trekking needs. Among Northern Kerala's most loved sites, Aralam has a wonderful selection of trails that people can choose from. This Wildlife Sanctuary is the northernmost protected area in all of God's Own Country. Cosily tucked in the southeast part of the district, it sits atop the northwest slopes of the Western Ghats, which famously join with the pristine forests of the Kodagu district of Karnataka.

Butterfly migration of Aralam

With the onset of the northeast monsoon, Aralam sees the spectacular natural phenomenon of butterfly migration. It starts during October-December from the plains to the Ghats and the vise-versa just before the advent of the southwest monsoon from the Ghats to the plains. It is said that the migratory butterflies breed on the Ghats during the winter-summer periods and their progeny starts returning to the plains by April. This stunning phenomenon helps butterflies to avoid the extreme monsoon conditions during their life cycle.



Biodiversity

Thalassery, the land from where Kerala's most beloved biriyani variation originates from, plays host to this wonderful conservatory, which was declared a sanctuary in 1984. Spread out over a massive area of 55 square kilometres, it is almost entirely covered in tropical and semi-evergreen forests along with patches of moist deciduous forests. These co-exist with teak and cashew plantations. It has a ton of exotic flora and fauna that attracts people to its trails in large numbers. People regularly spot large groups of elephants, gaur, sambar, Nilgiri Langur, Bonnet macaque, Hanuman Langur and the Malabar Giant Squirrel in these parts. Estimates say that the sanctuary has 23 species of mammals, 22 species of reptiles, 16 species of amphibians and 39 species of fishes. Over 188 different species of birds have also been spotted in the area, and the number keeps increasing on each survey. Some of the prominent sightings include Great Pied Hornbill, Malabar Grey Hornbill, the Blue Winged Parakeet, Ceylon Frogmouth, Broad Billed Roller, Nilgiri Wood Pigeon, Gray-necked Bunting, Zitting Cisticola and Cinnamon Bittern.



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Aralam Farm

The village in Aralam is host to the famous Central State Farm, now called the Aralam Farm, where a majority of India's hybrid coconut seeds have been made since 1971. Built along with the help of the erstwhile Soviet Union, it was eventually taken over by the SC & ST Development Department, Government of Kerala, to distribute 50% of the area to the landless tribals and the remaining 50% area to be run as a Farm for the welfare of tribals that were now settled in the Aralam Farm. It encompasses a total area of 3500 acres and lies 56 km away from Thalassery and Kannur Town and 16 km from Iritty Town.

Historical Significance

Kannur has, for long, played an integral role in the history of the entire State. With its ancient trade relations with the Greeks, Romans and Arabs, and its strategic location in the Western Ghats, a lot of the cultural flavour to Kerala emanates from these parts. Nicknamed fondly as the City of Looms and Lores, its legendary handloom industry and the majestic art form of Theyyam have earned it a special place in the hearts of all Keralites. These ritualistic dances are considered among the world's greatest art forms, where dance, music and mime bring the Gods to life amidst devotees numbering in the thousands. Said to get its very name from being the Land of Kannan or Lord Krishna, the place has a mystical aura that it has maintained for aeons. Apart from Aralam Wildlife sanctuary, other spots of interest in the district include Payyambalam and Muzhuppilangadu Beach, Arakkal Museum, St. Angelo's Fort etc.



TREKKING



Katti Betta, at about 1145m, is easily the tallest peak in the entire area. Those with a penchant for a nice hike on any sunny day can choose this site for the wide array of picnic spots available along the way. Families regularly make a beeline for the site from where one can see all of Aralam and its neighbouring cousins open up like a beautiful rose, unfurling petal by petal.



Meenmutty Trekking



The duration of this trip is an entire day. The journey kicks off with a jeep ride that takes you all the way to the waterfalls. The entire time you are escorted by a host of species that almost seem to be cheering you along, the entire way. A plethora of butterfly species are seen here in large numbers, so at times it feels like a rainbow is accompanying you to your site. The first pitstop is the beautiful Pothenplavu Watchtower, from which the entirety of Aralam and all of its majestic dense forest cover can be viewed firsthand. The Western Ghats and its entire expansions are open for all visitors from Minivets being extremely frequent. Next up are the majestic waterfalls, and it is here that your eyes feast on the best visuals of a pristine natural wonder, blossoming and shining like a beacon in the midst of a dense forest. Sit, take a dip and simply relax, as an entire forest gathers to rejuvenate you.

Cost of the Package

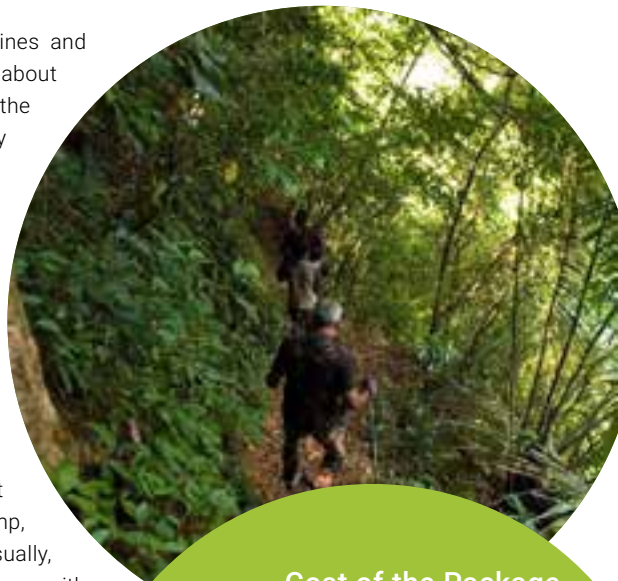
Rs.115/- per Indian Adult
Rs.40/- per Indian Child (13 years to 18 years)
Rs.10/- per Indian Child (below 13)
Rs.360/- per Foreign National
Vehicle Entry (LMV): Rs.110/-

You have to hire a jeep for this trek and for safety reasons, only five people are allowed in a jeep at a time.

Ambalappara Trekking

An entire hike up the magnificent trails, ravines and meadows that adorn Ambalappara takes about three days. The first night, you get to stay at the beautiful Amabalppara Watchtower. The one day trek, where the Meenmutty Watchtower is the camping spot, tends to be an easier journey overall. One can avail all the required amenities and facilities like tents and sleeping bags at Aralam Sanctuary itself. Said to be about 1500m above sea level, this intense trip sure leaves a lasting mark on all who try it. The visuals from this rarely breached vantage point are among the best in the entire district.

However, prior permission from the Forest Department is required before setting out to camp, so do contact them before planning your trip. Usually, a group of 6 tourists is allowed for the 3 days package with 5 guides to accompany them.



Cost of the Package

Trekking 3 hours

Rs.500 (minimum 5 members)

Rs.60 for additional person (max up to 10)

Trekking 6 hours

Rs.800/- per person (minimum 5 members)

Rs.100/- per person

plus the additional number (max up to 10)

Nature Camps

Annually, over 50-60 nature camps are held in this area to educate the future generations over the state of the environment and disseminate important facts, literature and tactics that help them understand more about the area and the world. School students are guided by NGOs, with the conservation of Aralam and other protected sanctuaries being a topic of prime concern.

Though most people in the area suggest that the best time to visit Aralam is from November to May, the Sanctuary remains open throughout the year.

The park operates from 08.00 AM to 04.00 PM. The entrance of the Sanctuary is via Valayalmchal. Vehicles can be parked here. It is preferable to use one's own vehicles as the sanctuary is stationed quite far from town limits. As mentioned earlier, advanced booking is essential for camping. It is advisable to have prior booking even for day visits. Office of the Assistant Wildlife Warden is nearby for any assistance.



**Cost of the
Package**

Rs.15/- for Adults (Indian National)

Rs.7/- for Children

Rs.150/- for Foreign Nationals

Movie or Video Camera Fee: Rs.150 & Rs.25/-

Accommodation Package

Quaint and calm Iritty is the nearest town to Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary. It is here that many of our visitors can find lodges, hotels, restaurants and even a Government guest house for accommodation. Another less cumbersome option to stay at is the guest house located at Valayamchal. While advanced booking is must in this establishment, it is well stocked with 2 bedrooms and a dormitory with about 50 beds.



Cost of the Package

Dormitory Rent

Rs.160 per head

Rs.50 per student

Room Rent

Rs.630 per day (single occupancy)

Rs.945 per day (double occupancy)

40 US Dollar per day for Foreign Nationals

Photos



PHOTOS

With the onset of the northeast monsoon, Aralam sees the spectacular phenomenon of butterfly migration.

PHOTOS



Gray Slender Loris,
regionally known as *Kuttihevangu* at Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary, Kannur

PHOTOS

The Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary is spread over 55 sq km of undulating forested highlands on the slopes of the Western Ghats.

PHOTOS

Meenmutty waterfalls located in the heart of Aralam is a captivating sight for the travellers. A trek to Meenmutty takes almost four hours and you can observe the scenic beauty of the rain forest at Aralam.

PHOTOS

Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary in Kannur is enriched by several streams and rivers including River Aralam, Cheenkannipuzha, Narikkadavu thodu, Kurukkathodu and Meenumuttithodu.

PHOTOS



Panoramic view of Brahmagiri Hills



Popularly known as Malabar pit viper (*Trimeresurus malabaricus*), is a venomous snake endemic to southwestern India.

PHOTOS



Cheenkannipuzha in Summer

PHOTOS



Meenmutty Watchtower at Aralam

PHOTOS



Trekking routes of Aralam

Videos

*Into the jungles of Kannur
- Aravam*



Videos

Araram Jeep Ride



Videos

Butterflies Aralam



Videos

Neenmatty Waterfalls



Videos

Neenmatty Watch Tower



Videos

Aralam River



Contact Information

The Wildlife Warden

Aralam Wildlife Division

Iritty P.O

Phone: +91 490 2493160, 2413160

Mobile: 9447979101, 8547603449

E-mail: ww-aralam@forest.kerala.gov.in

Website: www.aralam.com



Getting There



Nearest Railway Station:

Thalassery, about 55 km away



Nearest Airport:

Calicut International Airport, about 96 km from Thalassery Town

Location

5° 47' and 75° 57' East Longitude and 11° 54' and 11° 59' North Latitude.

Ecotourism

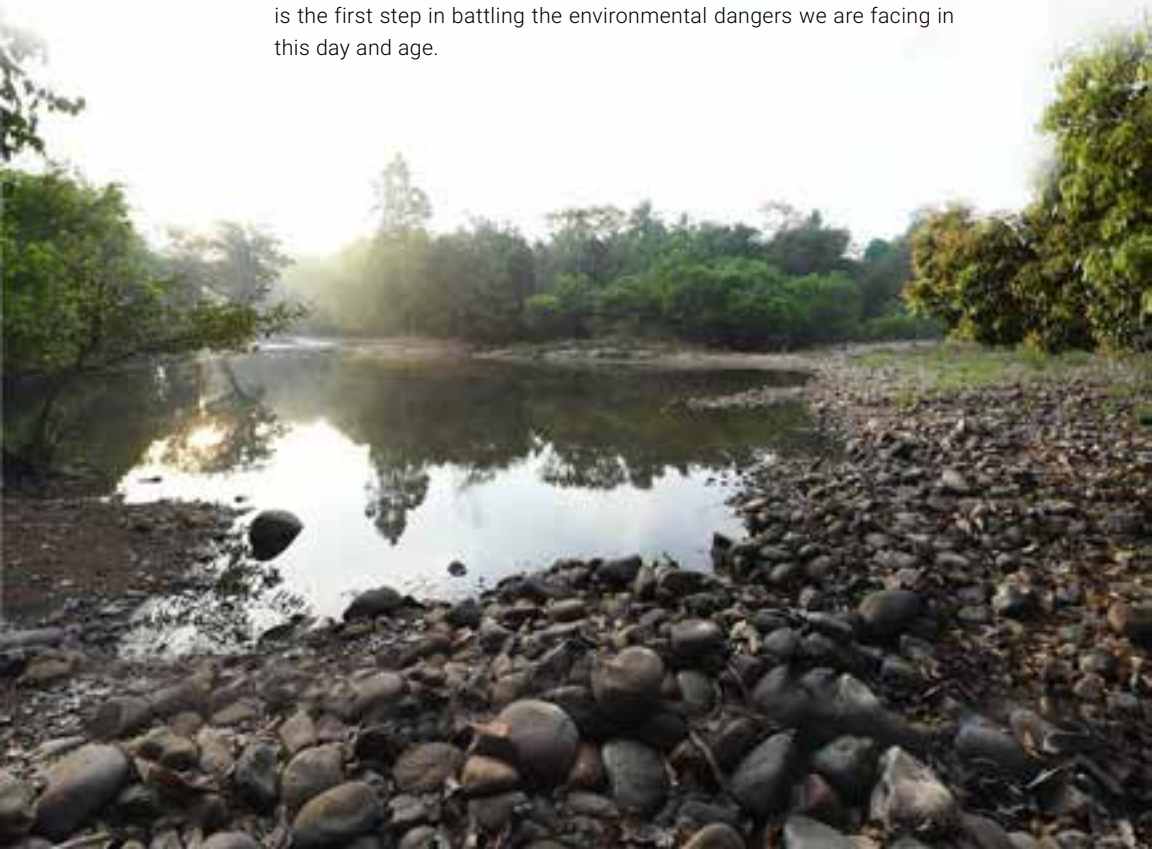
This planet we are on nurtures over 7 billion inhabitants on a daily basis. While its marvels are beyond the realm of any one person's imagination, it is easy to notice the damages that are being caused on each and every front, due to the rise in population and the spread of civilization. Even the uninhabited corners of Mother Earth are now being turned into urban centres, and this affects the fragile balance that has kept the planet afloat this entire time.

Tourism is a great bonding element, mixing and mashing cultural experiences from across the world. People gain empathy for those they may have nothing in common with, with places their ancestors may never have heard of or traditions they could never have even dreamt of. Hence, the combination of environmentally driven ecological sites being used as prime tourist destinations leads to the wonderful concept of ecotourism.



Significance of Ecotourism

Ecotourism lets people appreciate the many boons that Mother Earth has bestowed us with. It is the epitome of making people realize the true value of the treasures that we are endangering with our reckless actions. It is the clarion call that resonates within one's soul in a seamless but provocative manner, evoking the basic empathy that is the first step in battling the environmental dangers we are facing in this day and age.



Ecotourism at Aralam



The ecotourism efforts at Aralam are a very community-based affair. Regular nature camps are held, where the emphasis is specifically on younger children, as they are the ones for whom these natural resources have to be conserved. It is to them that the sanctuary officials and NGOs impart the highest amount of knowledge on the importance and requirements of conservation. The packages take one through a plethora of vantage points, with the accompanying guides informing all visitors of how the concentrated efforts of an entire community have helped maintained the Wildlife Sanctuary in its current pristine form. The unique ecology of Aralam invites huge number butterflies during December and January.

Why Kerala

The majestic trees and peeking wildlife that greet you during your journey are hallmarks of Kerala and its endless bounty of natural beauty. Much of our lore and tradition emanates from these parts, and they are treasure troves of our past and heritage. They are priceless cultural landmarks, behemoths of history and proud jewels that adorn our vast landscape. Kerala and its people have known for a long time the immense responsibility they have inherited from their ancestors; true crusaders who ensured the well-being of this land for centuries. It is now our moment, our time in history, to repay the gifts that the land has blessed us with.

Hence, the people and governments at all levels have come together to formulate ways to conserve and protect the myriad floral and faunal species that grace our unique landscape. Concerted efforts have been made in the last few decades, alongside budgetary allotments and specific policy changes, that has made Kerala one among the pioneers in the Ecotourism movement around the world. Being a region with such an abundance of natural resources, it seems only fitting that we set an example and lead the way in the global resistance against any threats to our environment.