

# Periyar in thekkady



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

**Periyar, Kerala**

Periyar in Thekkady district of Kerala is famous only for one reason-it is home to one of the Zealously guarded and efficiently managed protected areas of India and one of 27 tiger reserves in India. Periyar is located in biodiversity hotspot of India ie. the Western Ghats in God's Own Country, Kerala. It is home to rare, endemic and endangered flora and fauna. The biodiversity value of this national park can be understood from the fact that the park is home to 62 species of mammals, 320 species of birds, 45 species of reptiles, 27 species of amphibians, and 38 species of fishes. In last century a dam was built on the river falling in this area which led to the formation of a splendidly placed lake named Periyar lake of about 26 sq. km situated at the heart of the park. This lake is the water source of the park and it is the meeting place of all forms of wildlife and one easily comes across a herd of elephants playing in the water of the lake. Sprawled over an area of 777 Sq . km., Periyar is one of the finest protected lands of India watered by two main rivers the Periyar and Pamba.

A large number of elephants estimating 900-1000 are found in this tiger reserve explaining the ecological significance of this vast landscape. Gaur, a rare mammal , largest of bovines also found here. Periyar is an important tiger reserve with an estimated population of 35- 40 tigers in the park area. The park supported a large number of other rare creatures namely Nilgiri marten an extremely rare and endemic bird, the great pied hornbill, 160 species of butterflies, Striped necked mongoose, varieties of deer et al.

The periyar is different from most of other protected areas of India as on the pattern of protected areas of kenya. Periyar also has community oriented

projects involving local people in the conservation and preservation of the park and adjoining areas. People oriented and park centered community based ecotourism are the main characteristic feature of Periyar Reserve which are operated by local people responsible for the surveillance of the vulnerable parts of the reserve. The revenue generated in these projects is spent on the development of these areas and bring the sense of responsibility amidst the local people who may otherwise consider the wild creatures as their enemies. This model of community participation should also be introduced in parks where it is possible. People who once made a living by illegal operations in the forests have become forest protectors and earn their livelihood through these programmes. If as a tourist you play any role here you also become a conservationist. A large number of programmes like nature walk, bamboo rafting, border hiking, jungle patrol, jungle inn, trekking etc are available in the park territory.

Trekking in park area for instance involves traversing diverse habitats falling in the trekking routes, generally 4 to 5 km. in length offering opportunity to see birds, butterflies and other wildlife. The trails often pass through evergreen and moist deciduous forests interspersed with marshy grasslands. It can be done twice a day morning and evening under the guidance of tribal guide. There are other similar nature programmes to inculcate the awareness among the visitors. Periyar is rich in medicinal plants having more than 350 species as medicinally important. The evergreen forests support the majority of the medicinal plants followed by moist deciduous forests and southern hilltop tropical evergreen forests. There are other facilities like Boat Cruises in the Periyar lake and is well known boating spot for tourists. It is

unusual to see many animals from the boats, still you spot a family of elephants, Wild boar and Sambar deer by the water's edge. There are other places like Cradomom Hills, Munnar, Kodaikanal, Madurai, Cumbum Valley.

### **Best Time to Visit Periyar**

The best season to visit Periyar wildlife sanctuary is from the months of October and June. Most of the rainfall occurs during the southwest monsoon from June to September. The northeast monsoon impacts from October to December. There are some pre-monsoon showers from mid April.

### **How to reach**

#### **By Air**

Nearest airport is Cochin at 200-kms and Madurai in Tamil Nadu at 140-kms. Hire a taxi to reach periyar.

#### **By Rail**

Nearest railway line is Kottayam at 114-kms which has good road connection to periyar.

#### **By Road**

The nearest town from Periyar is Kumily, which is well connected by both state and private buses from Ernakulam and Madurai in Tamil Nadu and other main places.