

Natural Heritage Centres In Kanyakumari - A Study

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Kodaikkanal is situated at 2133 metres above sea level, in the beautiful **Palani Hills**.¹ It is a popular hill resort of Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu. It is very interesting to note the discovery of Kodaikkanal.² **Lieutenant Ward**, an Englishman, climbed up from Kunnavan village of Vellagavi to Kodaikkanal in 1821 to survey the area. In 1834, the then Madurai Collector **Mr. John Blackbrun**³ climbed the hill from **Devadanapathi** and built a small bungalow at the head of *Adukkam Pass* near **Shenbaganur**. In 1836, **Dr. Wight** a British botanist visited Kodaikkanal and recorded his observations, which were very useful to the botanists later.⁴ In 1844, **Mr. Fane**, another Englishman, built godowns in Kodaikkanal. In 1855, the first two bungalows "*Sunny Side*" and "*Shelton*" were built by American Missionaries with the help of **Mr. Fane**.⁵ The hill station **Kodaikkanal** was created to serve the needs of the British and Europeans in India.⁶ The 20th century saw elite Indians entering Kodaikkanal to enjoy its charm and beauty and to harness its natural wealth for development.

In 1875, the **South Indian Railway** extended its line from Madras to Tirunelveli and a station was created at **Ammaianayakkanur** (later known as Kodai Road) which provided a gateway to Kodaikkanal.⁷

Today, the charm of Kodaikkanal lies in its wooded slopes and gigantic trees. The mighty rocks, bowers, creeks and slopes captivate the visitors. The meadows, the long stretches of beautiful spots and the flocks of sheep grazing on green pastures are a perennial source of joy, delight and thrill to onlookers.⁸

Like the trek to **China Peak** in **Nainital** or the **Hanuman abode** in **Simla**, the climb to the various jutting rocks at **Kodai** is rewarding. For instance, the arduous daylong climb to the **Pillar rocks**, and rise into the sky to a height of 400 ft, is a must for every visitor to this hill resort.⁹

The Kodaikkanal Lake

The 24 hectare lake skirted by a 5 km. long black tar road, is the focal point of **Kodai**. This lake was created in 1863 by **Sir Vere Henry Levinge** (1819-1885) who was previously the Collector of Madurai, retired and settled in **Kodai**.¹⁰ He constructed the bund to form a lake and stocked the lake with fish. He brought the first boat from Tuticorin. In 1890, a boat club was formed and members of the club set sail. In 1910 a new boat house was constructed. The boat service was opened to the public and tourists as well in 1932.¹¹

Bryant's Park

This park is situated on the eastern side of the lake. It is noted for its flowers, hybrids and grafts. **The Flower show** conducted every year during May as part of the **Summer Festival**, should be seen by everyone.¹²

Solar Physical Observatory

It is situated 32 km. from the lake. This observatory was founded in 1989. Located at an elevation of 2343 metres, this observatory is the highest point in Kodaikkanal.¹³ Visitors can observe the stars and the planets.

Coaker's Walk

This hill edged pathway was identified by **Er. Coaker** in 1872.¹⁴ About a kilometre from the lake, **Coaker's walk** runs along a steep slope on the southern side of Kodaikkanal. It offers some of the best views of the plains.

Kurinji Andavar Temple

This temple, situated 3 km. from the lake, is a famous shrine dedicated to **Lord Muruga**. This temple is associated with the **Kurinji** flowers which bloom once in 12 years.¹⁵

Green valley view

It is about 5.5 km. from the lake and very near to the Golf Club. This point commands a beautiful view of the entire **Vaigai dam**.

As the valley here is very deep, dense and dangerous this place was once known as "**suicide point**".¹⁵

Silent valley view

Just a little away from the Pillar Rock, is **silent valley view** which provides a breathtaking view of silent valley.¹⁶

Shenbaganur Museum

This museum is maintained by the **Sacred Heart College** - a Theological Seminary founded in 1895. It is devoted to preserve certain archaeological remains and the flora and fauna of the hills. One of the best **Orchidariums** in the country, over 300 species of exotic orchids are housed here.¹⁷ It is about 5.6 km. from the lake.

Silver cascade

It is 8 km. from **Kodaikkanal lake**. The overflow of Kodaikkanal lake comes down here as a 180 feet high waterfall.¹⁸

Elagiri

Elagiri is an ideal tourist spot located in the North Arcot District and is on a hill of 970 metres elevation.¹⁹ The hill is at a distance of 16 km. from Vaniyambadi town and 5 km. from Jolarpet Railway Junction. The hill road has 13 bends and is 15 km. long. The place is developing as a picnic resort and is frequented by people from far and near during summer.

Kodanadu view point

Kodanadu is a little village about 18 km. from the east of Kotagiri in the Nilgiris District.²⁰ The huge valley dips down from feet to the level of the plains and rises again in the opposite to the level of Mysore Plateau. It commands a panoramic view of the plains and the eastern slope of the Nilgiris. A panoramic view of the **Thengumarahada** and the **Bhavanisagar dam** is the bonus from this point.²¹

END NOTES

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