

TRAVELHER

A Blissful Escapade

Supriya Aggarwal has spent almost a decade juggling her career and other responsibilities, leaving little time to spend with her family even while living in the same house. One day, she decided to surprise her mother by taking her on a vacation to explore Pollachi, the hidden gem of Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, and make up for lost moments.

Nestled in the temple state of Tamil Nadu, Pollachi is a small, relatively unexplored town. Located about 40 kms to the south of Coimbatore, it is the second-largest town in the district. Due to its proximity to the Western Ghats, Pollachi experiences pleasant climate throughout the year. With green hillsides draped in neatly lined tea bushes, coconut trees stretching towards the blue sky and the air thick with rustic charm, Pollachi is a land of natural prosperity.

I've settled in New Delhi with my family, and even though I love travelling, holidays are hard to come by with work and other responsibilities taking up most of my time. In fact, even city excursions with my parents is a luxury. In the midst of a particularly stressful rut of everyday life, I finally snapped - I decided to drop everything and give my mind the respite it so desperately craved. I wanted to give my mom a vacation as well, perhaps reconnect with the woman who has been a constant source of support and inspiration to me.

While looking for prospective destinations, I came across an online post on this quaint town of Tamil Nadu. After a lot of research and looking for proper arrangements for a comfortable stay ideal for an elder woman, I finally decided to visit Pollachi. Initially, I wasn't sure about what to expect from our first mother-daughter trip. As it turned out, we were a lot more alike in our choices. We both love to get a feel for a city on foot, relish history and adore natural beauty. Pollachi, therefore, was tailor made for a new adventure. I simply booked the flight tickets, made all the required reservations and even stealthily packed for both of us. Two days prior to the trip, I finally asked my mother to pick up her essentials and come with me. I expected pushback - my mum isn't exactly the spontaneous type. To my surprise, she agreed without hesitation! Perhaps she felt the need for some quality time with me, too. Elated and excited, we flew to Kochi and made the four-hour drive to our destination. The journey gave us ample time

to catch up on a lot of pending conversations.

History Revisited The owner of the resort we were staying at told us about an 800-year-old *zamindar* palace named the Aranmanai Palace in Uthukuli, which is about an hour's drive from the resort. It seemed like a good place to start our trip. The very fact that this expansive mansion had been in existence even before the Mughals established their empire in India intrigued my mother. Owing to our inquisitive nature, we tried to find out the history of this palace, which is currently home to erstwhile *zamindar*, Arunkumar Kalingarayar.

Arunkumar lives here with his son Siddharth. He told us that the palace had been constructed in different phases. While the earliest building is 800 years old, the recent one where the family lives, is only a century old.



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Image: Palm And Tours



About the Author



Supriya Aggarwal is a New Delhi-based independent media professional with deep-rooted interests in travel, heritage, culture and food writing. She also pens her thoughts and experiences on The Humming Notes (thehummingnotes.com) and you can search #THNdiaries to read some engaging stories.

Image: Supriya Aggarwal



1. Parambikulam has many dams, with the Parambikulam Dam being the largest of them all.
2. Anamalai Tiger Reserve is a protected area located in the Anaimalai Hills of Pollachi and is home to several herds of Asiatic elephants.
3. Statue of a guardian deity at the Anaimalai Masani Amman Temple, a highly revered shrine situated in the Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu.

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For the history aficionados in us, the palace's numerous bedrooms, the library, sheds for bullock carts and cars, the large granary and *cutchery* (court chamber) where the *zamindars* held court in the yesteryears, were an awe-inspiring sight. We chatted with the friendly residents about the palace, learning about its history.

A Tryst with Nature Pollachi is a reserve for the elusive tiger, and is rich in natural resources. The Anamalai Tiger Reserve seemed like an unmissable stop on our trip, with its abundance of indigenous flora and fauna and lush greenery. The park is also a haven for birdwatchers as the region is endemic to many avifauna species. Much to our delight, we spotted a white-throated kingfisher, a tree kingfisher found all across Asia and Turkey, and a Malabar parakeet endemic to the Western Ghats. Being a travel writer,

I have been on many journeys but this one was the first-of-its-kind. The sheer joy of seeing my mother getting all excited behind the binoculars as soon as she spotted a bird was a treat.

The Anamalai Tiger Reserve also has a Topslip Point. According to our guide and companion Maheswar PTS, Director, Coco Lagoon by the Great Mount Resort, it is the highest point in Pollachi and was used by the Britishers to shift large wooden logs to Kerala.

Spirituality and Mythology My mother loves visiting temples, and the famous Anaimalai Masani Amman Temple was one of the pilgrim spots that she was longing to visit. After our adventure at the tiger reserve, we decided to visit this famous temple dedicated to Goddess Arulmigu Masani Amman.

The spiritual side of Pollachi had an amazing effect on us. We

followed this elevated level of consciousness with a few minutes of introspective silence at the *samadhi* (tomb) of Vethathiri Maharishi, the great spiritual leader and the founder of the Temple of Consciousness, also known as Aliyar Ashram.

The moment we stepped out of the temple, I could see my mother was moist-eyed. Her excitement knew no boundaries as she listened carefully to everything that the temple priest had to tell us.

On Cloud Nine, Literally As we were drawing close to the end of our journey, we decided to take the three-hour uphill drive from Pollachi to Valparai - a beautiful hill station. The route to Valparai has more than 35 hairpin bends! We braved the journey to witness a breathtaking view of the tea plantations here. Finally, we decided to call it a day at a charming wooden chalet nestled within a tea garden.

Mom treated herself to some Ayurveda therapies at the resort. We also did a meditation session together and realised how the mere presence of your loved ones relaxes you. Ever since this trip, we have had a newfound appreciation for each other.

Too often we think of our parents as only authority figures in charge of our well-being, too far away from our own way of life to ever be relatable. We forget that they, like us, have aspirations and dreams; that they, like us, are still figuring out how to make the best of what they have. I have always admired my mother for her generosity and courage, but this trip showed me shades of her I didn't know existed. The woman who berates me for eating out or working too much, disappeared, to be replaced by a girl who loves pigging out on *masala dosa* (fermented crepe made from rice batter and lentils) and racing up hills to proclaim herself the queen of Pollachi!

This journey has transformed both of us in ways we could never have imagined. The relationship that we share now is more profound, going far beyond everyday niceties. I recommend everyone to take a vacation with their mum or dad. Such trips are important to rekindle the joy in relationships. 🍷



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Image: Supriya Aggarwal

1. A tea plantation in Valparai. The town is home to a lot of tea estates. 2. The Valparai - Vazhachal Forest route is a beautiful course, going past spellbinding waterfalls and large dams.

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Image: coimbatoretouristtopsites.blogspot.in

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Endless greenery
and lakes make for a
soothing getaway to
Pollachi in Tamil Nadu.

