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River Siruvani

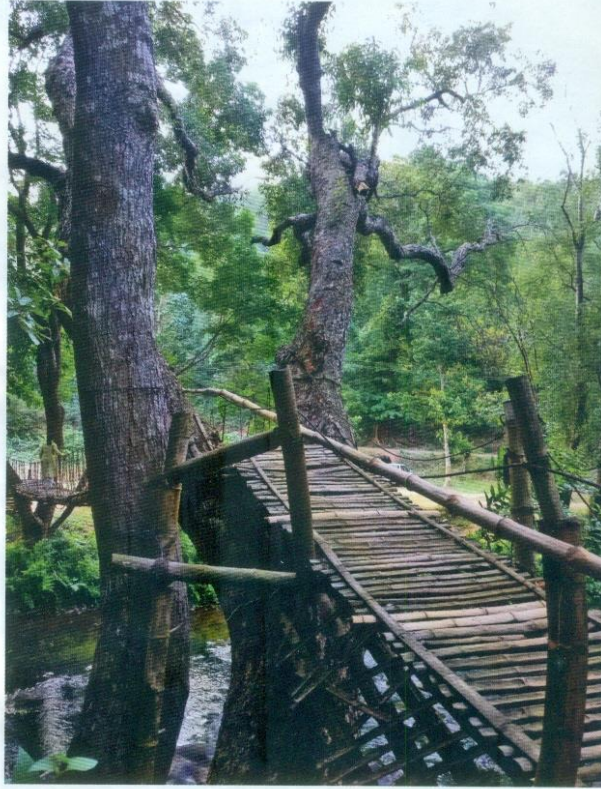
Leap into nature's LAP!

Swiss chalets at the resort



Is it dense forests, rolling hills and lyrical rivers you crave? 'Anaikatti – By the Siruvani' (a Sterling Holidays Resort) has all the answers, says **Aditi Kane**.

A bamboo bridge hangs idly above the Siruvani



MAKING WAY TO THE HILLS

The best way to reach Anaikatti is a flight to Coimbatore, from where it's a one-and-a-half hour's drive. A picturesque route through the blue-green Nilgiris, and finally there we were at 'Anaikatti - By the Siruvani' (a Sterling Holidays Resort). General Manager Pravish and Sathish G, Manager of the Activity Centre, greeted us warmly and gave us a brief introduction to this little known holiday destination.

A STYLISH RESORT

The property itself is a stylish getaway with Swiss chalets perched on a hill overlooking the sparkling River Siruvani. Incidentally, the Siruvani is the pride of the region as it boasts of the sweetest water in India, and the second sweetest in the world!

There were kids splashing in the pool, guests swinging their arms at the mini golf course, and happy shrills coming from the activity centre; and it was clear that there was never a dull moment at the resort.

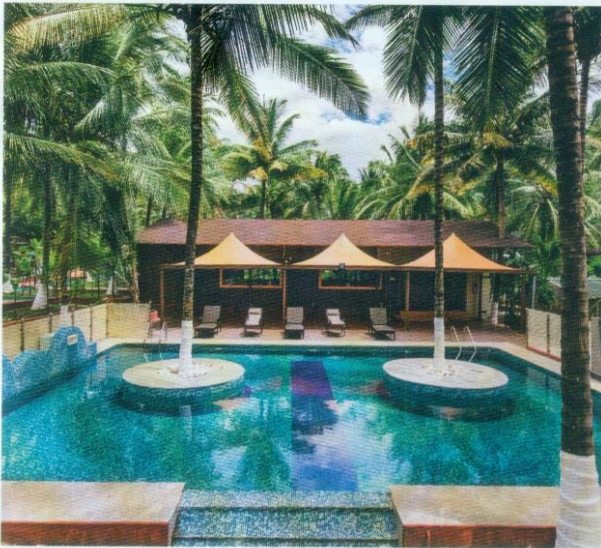
But I was hungry, and thankfully for me, the food was absolutely sumptuous! "Our chef is famous for his authentic and exotic dishes," smiled Sathish, watching me gorge on South Indian and Italian delicacies.

ACTIVITY TIME!

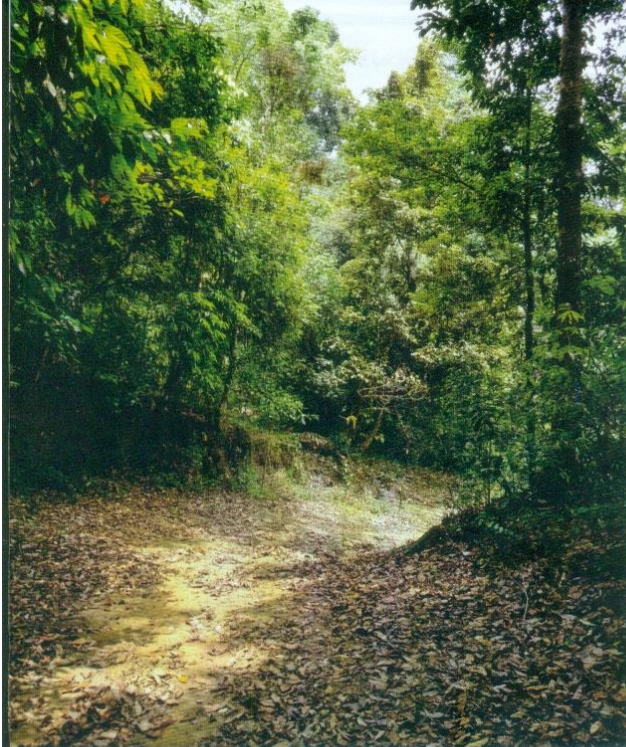
The actual thrill of being in Anaikatti though is in exploring this exciting, unspoiled region. There are plenty of activities to choose from. On the first night itself, we set off on an exhilarating safari. It was a full moon night and as our jeep swerved along dirt tracks, we spotted a herd of sambars grazing languidly. On the way back, we bumped into a procession of the native Irula tribals who were on their way to offer their first harvest to the deity.

TEMPLES AND ANCIENT LANDS

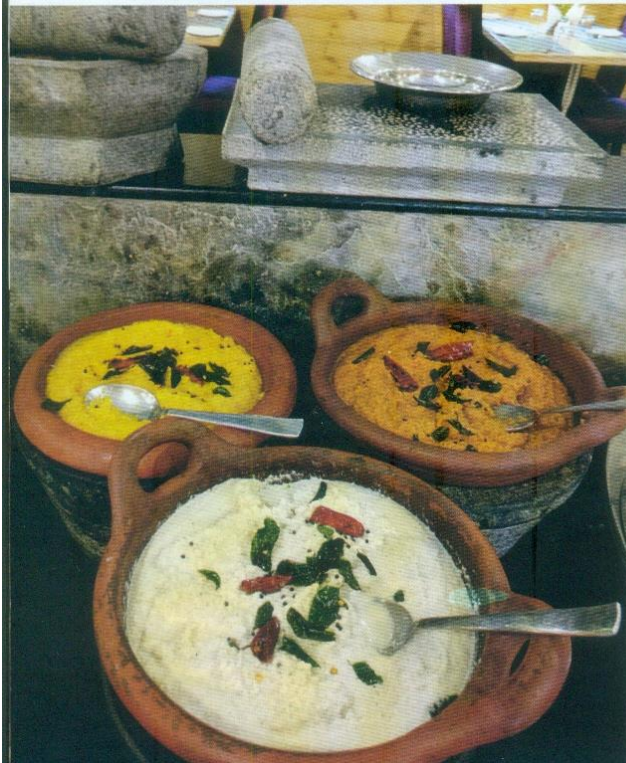
The next morning, we seek blessings at the Ranganathaswamy Temple on Pallamalai Hill



The inviting pool at Anaikatti - By the Siruvani



A path at the Silent Valley reserve
Bright coloured chutneys to savour



The actual thrill of being in Anaikatti is exploring this exciting, unspoiled region.

in the Kovanoor region. Then we set out for a 2,500-year-old cave temple dedicated to the Goddess Ponkool Thayyar. Situated 150 steps above ground, the temple is in the heart of a rock cavity with 60 tribal paintings on its walls. An absolutely unique attraction!

RIVER WALK, AN ABSOLUTE MUST!

In the evening it was time for a river walk by the magical Siruvani. Trees in bloom lined the roads and we stopped by a dream-like spot. The water tasted sweet and as we dipped our feet in the running currents, we saw tiny zebra fish dodging the flow. The Siruvani had us under her spell!

INTO THE JUNGLE!

"Eat well," said Sathish, the next morning as we packed in masala *idlis* and *appams* for breakfast. "Our next expedition is the 'Silent Valley' with no stops on the way."

An hour later, we were at the famous 'Silent Valley' – one of India's last remaining rainforest reserves. Malabar squirrels perched upon the branches twisted their multi-hued tails, while langurs leapt with abandon. 23 kms into the forest, we finally arrived at the 100 foot tall watch tower for a birds-eye view of the reserve.

GOODBYES AND EXCHANGES

It was a packed trip and our minds were reeling from the heady dose of spectacular visions we had witnessed. As we set off for Mumbai once more, one thing was for sure, to beat the city blues, it didn't get better than a trip to Anaikatti!

Answers by: Aditi Kulkarni