**Valparai**

Valparai is a Taluk and hill station in the Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu,India. It is located 3,500 feet above sea level on the Anaimalai Hills range of the Western Ghats, at a distance of 100 km from Coimbatore and 65 km from Pollachi.There are 40 hairpin bends on the way up to Valparai from Azhiyar. While major portions of the land are owned by private tea companies, large forest areas continue to be out of bounds.

Valparai is a newly explored tourist spot located in the Anamalai hills of Western Ghats. Entering the forest and tea gardens of Valparai you can enjoy the presence of many streams, dams, valleys, waterfalls, high mountains, grass lands, flora and fauna.

Valparai is different from other tourist spots unlike Ooty, Munnar, Kodaikanal etc because of some if its unique nature. Ecotourism is given more importance than regular form of tourism. Chinnakallar in Valparai records maximum rainfall next to Chirapunji. Valparai is the only hill station in the world which has 12 dams and hydro electric power stations.

**Our plan:**

Date of Departure: 27th May 2015, Chennai to Coimbatore

Coimbatore to Valparai – 109 kms in private car/coach

Stay: Stanmore Chalets, Briar Tea Bungalows

Return: 31st May 2015, Coimbatore to Chennai

**Highlights**:

1. Pack light. Bring your shoes, we will be trekking and visiting falls, dams, etc.
2. Carry flashlight – not necessary that we will use it though
3. Weather will be pleasant to cool, with possibility of light rain. So carry jeans, tracks, shorts, stuff that could dry easy, couple of sweaters/pullovers/cardigans. Extra socks and flip flops. Maybe even a raincoat/windcheater
4. We will have campfire on one of the nights. We’ll pack some marshmallows ☺
5. Carry all your basic meds – if you get car sick, suggest you pack a lot of avomines as there are a lot of hairpin bends en route to Valparai
6. Breakfast is paid for, we will decide locally for other meals.
7. Daily plan will be finalized locally.

**Do/See:**

The most popular ones in Valparai – we’ll cover those that we like and are feasible.

**Aanamalai wildlife sanctuary**

Aanamalai wildlife sanctuary is situated at an altitude of 1,400 meters near Pollachi with a total area of 958 sq kms. The sanctuary is filled with various fauna like green pigeon, pangolin, sloth bear, panther, elephant, tiger, gaur, deer etc.

**Aaliyar dam**

Located at Aliyar, in the Aanamalai range, in the foot hills of Valparai at a distance of 24 kms from pollachi. Aliyar dam is a famous picnic spot, the park near the dam is well maintained and pulls many tourists to Aliyar dam. The park opens at 8.30 Am and closes at 5.30 pm, with a very minimum entry charge per head.

**Birla Falls**

Birla falls is 2km from Valparai. Situated in sholayar estate surrounded by tea fields. Watching the water fall in the mid green tea fields is a pleasant view for eyes.

**Congreve falls**

The falls is situated in Nadumalai estate, this falls is named after C.R.T Congreve, one of the early explorers of this hill.

**Manompally forest:**

This reserve forest truly provides the icing on the cake for Valparai. Located at about 20 km from the town, this place is sure to get your jaws dropping in fascination. Graced by the Manompally river(with a few crocodiles, of course), this reserve forest provides adventurous treks, a high probability to sight some of endangered species. There is a trekking shed( rest house) on the banks of Manompally river which doubles up as a base camp for those bent on adventure. Prior permission from the Forest Department required.

**Grass Hills:**

If Manompally is the icing on the cake for Valparai, Grass Hills is the cherry on the top. There are no words to describe this bejeweled beauty which adorns the crown of Valparai. Talk about the most secluded, most beautiful, most enchanting and the most peaceful place on earth, talk about grass hills. This is a paradise on earth. Forming a part of Indira Gandhi National Park, Grass hills is a remnant of the unique Shola grasslands found only in the higher reaches of the Western Ghats. The Shola grasslands are a unique ecosystem. A host of species found here, like the Nilgiri Tahr and Nilgiri Pipit, are not found anywhere in the world. The lush green meadows present there are those ones see in their romantic dreams. Patterns emerge in the unending carpet of grass a copse of Shola trees resembles a mango and another, the outline of India. The fire lines drawn around them emphasize their shape. These are by far the only things man-made in Grass Hills. Nature lovers and geologists in search of 'Ox-bow' lakes are sure to find one too many. The door to this place is strictly opened to nature lovers only. Prior permission from the Forest Department required.

**Athirapally falls:**

An 80 km drive from Valparai through one of the thickest evergreen forests in India simulates the canopied rainforests of Amazon and Central Africa. The canopy is so thick that any tough effort taken by sunlight to enter the forest seems clumsy. Such is the road that leads to the falls. Popularly known as 'Punnagai Mannan falls' or 'the Indian Niagara', Athirapally falls has been the backdrop for many south Indian movies. You can look at it from the top and from the bottom as well. You can take bath in the Chalakudy river too. On the way there are two other falls Charpa and Vazachal. In Charpa falls the water plunges on to the road in the monsoon, so get ready to get drenched if you are visiting it in the rainy season. Vazhachal waterfalls is set in the backdrop of a lush green forest near gorges.

**Nallamudi- Pooncholai(valley view):**

Location: 15kms from Valparai. Nallamudi valley view can be reached thorough a gateway in the tea garden. From here you can spot an excellent view Anaimudi peak, the highest peak in South India. There are few falls on the valley one of which appear as streaks. This is truly a sight to behold. The nearby tribal settlements provide ample opportunity to satisfy the explorer in you.

**Monkey falls:**

Location:4kms from the Azhiyar park,near the Valparai- Navamalai diversion. One of nature's finest and purest sources of minerals and ayurvedic formulations, these falls truly rejuvenate your body and mind.

**Loams view point:**

Location: 9th hairpin bend. This gives a panoramic view of the Azhiyar dam. Consider yourself lucky if you spot endangered Nilgiri Tahr, the State animal of Tamil Nadu.

**Tiger valley:**

Location: Approximately 35 kms enroute Valparai. Provides a spectacular view of Kadamparai and the upper Azhiyar projects. Wind mills situated on the plains can be a feast to the eyes, try zooming in your binoculars.

**Balaji temple:**

Location: Approximately 10 kms from Valparai. Fables will tell you that the presiding deity here is not any less powerful than Thirupathi Balaji himself. A private estate makes sure that the abode of the lord is maintained in pristine condition. Located amidst serene tea gardens, the silence and the climate prevailing here makes it an ideal place to reinforce one's conviction in the almighty. There is also a play area and a lawn for the tiny tots.

**Dams in Valparai:**

There are about 8 Dams in and around Valparai namely Sholayar(one in TN and another in Kerala), Azhiyar, Parambikulam, Upper Nirar, Lower Nirar, Kadamparai and Upper Azhiyar. Each dam has significance in its own way.