

THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM PLACES IN AND AROUND SALEM AND NAMAKKAL DISTRICTS WITH REFERENCE TO POLICY MAKING IN GOVERNMENT SECTORS

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Tourism is travel for recreational or leisure purposes. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people who —travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited.

Tourism is a major growth engine for economic development in terms of providing employment and eradication of poverty. The economic significance of tourism in terms of employment, income, foreign exchange earnings and regional development is a major driving force to place tourism appropriately in development.

The economic liberalization, open-sky aviation policy, luxury cruises, improved surface transport, tourist trains, increased business travel and e-booking facilities have created a paradigm change in the tourism sector. From a mere service industry, tourism has transformed into a major revenue generating industry.

Salem region includes two districts namely; Salem and Namakkal. For the administrative convenience districts Salem and Namakkal were bifurcated. The study area includes all the said four districts. Every district in Salem region has tourism specialties of their own. Now an attempt has been made to explain the tourism specialties in all the individual districts.

Salem District

Salem is a city and a municipal corporation in Salem district in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Salem is located in the north central part of the state, about 340 kilometers. South west of the state capital was Chennai. Salem is the fifth biggest city in Tamil Nadu in terms of size after Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Tiruchirappalli respectively. It is the fifth municipal corporation, located at the base of the popular tourist destination of Yercaud hills. This town is surrounded by hills on all sides. Tourism Specialities – Entertainment Tourism, Parks There are three parks in Salem namely, Kurumbappatti zoological park, Anna park near four roads and Ramakrishna park. The Kurumpapatti zoological park was not maintained properly. It is located 7 kilometers from Salem city and the road is also very poor.

But recently an up gradation was done o attract the tourists. During weekend local people go there with families to entertain children. Anna Park is an entertainment centre focused on children with many games for the children. Ramakrishna Park became extinct and now it is only a bus stop.

Religious Tourism Sites

Tharamangalam Kailasanathar

Temple It is a lord Siva temple, the most beautiful of its kind in Salem. Parts of the temple existed in tenth century itself and the temple was completed during 17th century by Vanangamudi cholan. The structure and architecture of the temple is magnificent. It is beyond explanations. It attracts pilgrims from all parts of the state and foreign tourists also visit there. every year on February 21 and the consequent three days, a great solar and architectural wonder can be seen in the temple during the sunset the rays of the sun travel through the front Gopuram source at the temple's entrance gate and travels across the front plane to fall directly on to the statue of Siva, making the lingam appear to glow. The movement of the sun beam can be witnessed. It is a miracle of architectural expertise. Recently Tamil Nadu has declared Taramangalam temple as a heritage temple.

Sugavaneswarar Temple

It is also a very important shrine in Salem. Mythology records that Suga Brahma Rishi worshipped the lord here. Arunagirinathar has sung a song on lord Muruga in this temple. It was constructed during 13th century by Mamannar Sundara Pandian. No frogs ever lived in the pond of this temple. The historians and pilgrims say that the temple lives for four yugas. This ancient temple should also be declared as a heritage temple.

Siddhar Koil

It is about 10 kilometers from Salem city towards Ellampillai (Siddhars are saints who could perform miracles – Siddha is a system of medicine developed by them). It is believed that Kalanginathar a famous Siddhar lived in the nearby Kanjamalai and attained Samadi here. The local people throng this temple every new moon day to other prayers and to take bath in the nearby stream believed to have medicinal values.

Kandashramam

It is located 10 kilometers from Salem city towards Attur road. It is located on a hill which is famous for the temples dedicated to goddess Ashtadasa Bhuj Mahalakshmi and lord Murugan.

Kumaragiri

It is about 5 kilometers from Salem city, towards Attur. It is abode of lord Muruga. The pilgrims need to climb up a tedious journey to worship lord Muruga.

Sri Kothandapani Ramar Temple

Sri Kothandapani Swami temple at Ayyodhiyapattanam represents the spiritual ancestry of our temples without any pomp and splendor as the very qualities of Sri Rama but majestic in its appearance. This place has derived the name as it had the foot prints of lord Sri Rama. Every stone of the temple bears an immortal poetry. Every pillar is an outstanding example of temple architecture arresting the attention of the visitor. Each produces music when tapped. It is the conclusion of the learned that one need not visit the Ayodhya in the north and

it would suffice if they visit the temple at Ayyoathyapattanam. It is 10 kilometers from Salem city towards Attur road and needs a left hand turning near Ayodhyapattanam railway gate.

Thanthondreeswarar Temple - Belur

It is an abode of lord Siva - one of the ancient temples in India. The famous Kannampullar Nayanar hailed from this place. It is about 20 kilometers from Salem city.

Yercaud

Yercaud is a hill station near Salem, Tamil Nadu in the Shervarayan range of hills in the Eastern Ghats. It is at an attitude of 1515 meters above the mean sea level. It attracts the tourists throughout the year, since the climate is very appealing and pleasant even during the winter. Neither the summer will be too hot nor is the winter too chill. It has many tourism attractions. It is called poor man's Ooty.

Tourism Spots in Yercaud - Lake

When the tourists enter Yercaud town, the lake welcomes them with its cool breeze. Boating facility is provided by the TTDC. Rowing boat, pedaling boat and motor boats are available. Self-rowing is not allowed to the tourists.

Anna Park

Just opposite to the lake Anna park is located. It is where flower show is celebrated every year. Anna park is meant for children. Many games are available here to entertain children. Tourists come there with their children enjoy their time pleasantly take their lunch or Tiffin there which they brought. Entrance fee rs.20 is collected here.

Ladies Seat

It is about 3 kilometers from the lake. It provides a panoramic view of Salem from there. Many tea shops and snack shops are there. Spices are also sold here. The TTDC provides telescope viewpoint here.

Gents Seat

Just half-a-kilometer from ladies seat gent's seat is located. The tourists should climb 35 steep steps to have a better view of the hair pin bends and Salem city.

Children's Park

To entertain the children with games the children's park was opened just half-a-kilometer from Gents seat. The tourists can enjoy the cold breeze and, in the winter, tourists will be embraced by the mist here.

Pagoda Point

It is seven kilometers from lake. Comfortable seating arrangements are made here for the tourist to take rest. A view point is also located here. lord rama's temple is also here. Parking fee is collected here. From the view point tourists can have magnificent view of the villages under the foot hills.

Deer Park

It is located just adjacent to the lake. to entertain the tourists and children deers, birds and other small animals are here. Many games for the children are provided here. The dense trees in the park make the tourists to get rid of the tediousness of the journey. It is provided with water facility where tourists can have their food. Entrance fee is collected here also.

Aquarium

It is a new endeavour in yercaud to attract the tourists. Varieties of fishes are displayed here.

Manjakuttai

It is a very beautiful view point. Very recently the TTDC has built a view point here. The tourists can have a pleasant view of the ravines and villages from here. But now fence is built by the neighbor and the sun rise view point lost its charm.

Raja Rajeswari Temple

It is located on the way towards Shervarayan temple. It is hardly 3 kilometers from the lake. It is a place of religious tourism. The deity and the positive vibrations in the temple are to be worshipped and experienced respectively.

Sherveroyan Temple

This is the peak of Yercaud hills. An ancient temple is here. The deity's name is |Sherveroyan. The hill received its name only from the deity. A large plain ground is near the temple is an additional admiration here. The tourists can conveniently park their vehicle, relax, can have a thrilling view of the villages downhill, enchanted by the mist. every year during the summer, there will be a festival in the temple, people from all the nearby villages gather in thousands.

Kiliyur Water falls

It is 6 kilometers away from the lake. Now only the road is laid to the falls. All tourists cannot go to the falls because the approach road is missing. The tourist should get down from the hill, where there are no steps. It is 2 kilometers tedious journey to the falls. The tourist should jump, bend twist and at times crawl step by step to reach the falls. It is really adventure tourism. Getting down to the falls is very tedious and climbing back from the falls is very tiresome. Woman tourists cannot go there.

Karadiyur View Point

It is a new tourist spot in Yercaud. There is a watch tower built by the forest department. It is 6 kilometers away from the lake. The approach road is not properly laid. The panoramic view of the dense forests, ravines and mountains from the watch tower makes the tourist to forget the journey risk and pain taken and compels them to come again and again.

Maha Meru Temple

This is newly built one and rare of its kind, 5 kilometers away from the lake towards Karadiyur. Maha Meru is an architectural wonder and has mythological value. It attracts tourists and pilgrims from all places.

Mettur Dam

It is one of the tourism attractions in Salem district. The Stanley reservoir which is commonly known to people as Mettur dam is 128 feet high. It is a grand view when the dam is in its full capacity. Near the dam there is a big park. Tourists use to come there, spend their time very leisurely, children play there, and eat there. It is an ideal picnic spot. Muniyappan temple near Mettur dam attracts tourists and pilgrims throughout the year.

Namakkal

Namakkal district is an administrative district in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. The district was bifurcated from Salem district with Namakkal town as headquarters on 25-07- 1996 and started to function independently from 01-01-1997. The district has 4 taluks (subdivisions); Tiruchengode, Namakkal, Rasipuram, velur and kolli hills(in descending order of population) and has two revenue divisions; Namakkal and Tiruchengode. It was ranked second in a comprehensive economic environment index ranking of districts in Tamil Nadu not including Chennai prepared by institute for financial management and research in august 2009. It was major source of Tamil Nadu economy. As of 2011, Namakkal district had a population of 1,726,601 with a sex-ratio of 986 females for every 1,000 males. A city and an administrative district, Namakkal is one of the most popular tourist destinations of the southern part of India. Located in Tamil Nadu Namakkal offers a wide range of attractions to people from varied interests. The city is renowned for its well maintained infrastructure and environment. It is famous as a historical city, an educational city, a poultry city and transport city. It officially became a district in 1997 after it was separated from Salem district. The history of Namakkal dates back to the 7th century.

Geography

Namakkal district is bounded by Salem district on the north; on the east by Attur taluk of Salem district, perambalur and tiruchirapalli district's; by karur district on the south and on the west by erode district. Namakkal district comes under the north western agro climatic zone of Tamil Nadu. It is situated in the dividing portion of two watersheds between cauvery and the vellar system with the taluks of Attur, rasipuram and Namakkal on the east and Salem, omalur and mettur on the west. Tiruchengode taluk alone is placed under western agro-climatic zone. Besides the above two zones, kolli and a few isolated hills and ridges are scattered over Namakkal, rasipuram and Tiruchengode and along with the valleys and rolling hills, make up the characteristic topography of the district.

Industry

The main occupation in the district is agriculture. The cultivation generally depends on monsoon rains, wells and tanks. Nearly 90 percent of the cultivated area is under food crops. The principal cereal crops of this district are paddy, cholam, cumbu and ragi. Panivaragu,

Kuthiraivali, Samai Varagu and Thinai are some of the millets cultivated. Among pulses, the major crops are redgram, blackgram, greengram and horsegram. Among oil seeds groundnut, castor and gingelly (sesame) occupy important places. Of the commercial crops, sugarcane, cotton and tapioca are some of the important crops. Tapioca is used for the manufacture of sago. Namakkal district is noted for Truck and Lorry external body building which dates back to 1956. Throughout India Tiruchengode is known for its Body Building industry for Trucks, Trailers, Tankers and Rig Unit. Finished trucks and Rig Units are even exported to foreign countries from Namakkal. Nearly 25000 people are employed both directly and indirectly in truck body building activity and about 300 units in Namakkal and 100 Units in Tiruchengode are engaged in this activity. Poultry development has been rather phenomenal in the district of Namakkal. The district is also well known for its poultry and dairy industries, accounting for a bulk of supply of poultry products to neighbouring industries. In fact, Namakkal produces about 65% of the egg output of Tamil Nadu.

Aiyaru River

Beautiful river, its constituent streams are Aroychi Aru, Kanappadi Moolai Aru, Maasimalai Aruvi, Nakkattu Aru, and Thazhigai Aru. It Originates in the Siddhan Kuttu Peak (4500) as Vellaipaazhi Aru. At various points of its course in the kolli malai, this river is known as the Arappalli isvarar Aruvi. Beyond the Arappalli isvarar Kovil it falls down as Akaasa Gangai and flows out of the district at Puliyaamsolai to join with the Kaveri.

Anjaneyar Koil

Namakkal is famous for a life size Hanuman Statue (Anjaneynar) of about 200 feet height carved out of a single stone. The city lies at the foot of a huge rock, upon which there is a fort.

Arthanareeswarar Koil

The only Siva temple in Tamil Nadu dedicated to the Halved-woman lord. The temple is situated on the Thiruchengode Mountain at a height of 465 metres. The chief deity is a statue of 5' high and is believed to have been created by siddhas out of a herbal compound. The temple also contains shrines for Murugan (Chengottu Velavar) and Vishnu.

Kailasanathar Koil

This Siva temple is known as the Keezh Kovil (Lower temple) with reference to its location in the town as as against the Mael Kovil (upper temple) of Arthanari Isvarar, which is up on the hill. Its chief deity was referred to as Vikrama, Pandeewarar after the Pandian King Vikrama who is said to have begun the construction of the temple. A well in the south eastern part of the town is still known as the Parian Pazhi.

Namakkal Dhurgam Fort

It is one of the naturally strong forts steeped in bloody history of the district. It was retaken by Hyder Ali a few months afterwards and was lost again to the British in 1792.

Kavignar Ramalingam Pillai Memorial Illam

He was born on 10-10-1888. He had the distinction of being appointed as 'Aasthana Kavignar' (poet of the state) and later honoured with the title of 'Padmabushan'. As a mark of respect his memorial was opened on 21-02-2000. His Memorial Illam is located in 39, Kavinger Ramalingam Street.

Kolli Hills

Kolli Hills is a major mountain range and is an outliner of the Eastern Ghats. It is eighteen miles (28 Kilometers) long (north south) twelve miles (19 Kilometers) wide (east/west) and the Koll Block covers 441.4 square kilo meters. It falls within the following coordinates. Rest Longitude 78° 17'05" to 78° 27'45" and North Latitude 11° 55' 05" to 11° 21'10". The name Kolli Malai refers to the mountain's once hostile nature; the unsuspecting and unaccamatised aliens, attracted by natural beauty. Viewed from plains of Namakkal the mountain appears as a flat-topped mass. The mountain has been inhabited from prehistoric times. It is much celebrated in the Tamil Literature of the Sangam period; at least eleven poets mention it in their poems. As per Census 2011, the population of the Kolli Hills is 36852. There are 14 village panchayats and 275 hamlets. The population predominantly consists of scheduled tribes called Hindu Malayali whose spoken language is only Tamil. In two pockets SC population is found which around 700 acre. Cultivation of Jack Fruit, Guvava, Hill Banana, Pineapple, Pepper, Coffee, Cardamom, tapioca, honey and rice are the main agricultural activities. The government reserve forests are seen in Ariyur, Puliyan Solai, Selur and Vazhavandhi Nadu. An area of 200 hectares is in the process of reforestation. Tigers and elephants which were once common in it are now extinct; only small animals such as black bears, hares, porcupines, and wild dogs are seen. Legends have it that the hills were part of the famous Madhuvanam (Honey Forest) reserved by Sugriva of the epic Ramayana. The Maximum elevation ranges from 3500' to 4500' with the tallest peak Vettakaramalai, is rising to 4663' above sea level. The hills formed a natural boundary between the Kongu Nadu and Chola Nadu. At the beginning of the Christian era the Mountain and its habitants were ruled by Mazhavars and the King Valvil Ori was much celebrated among them. Legends have it that he was a great archer and released an arrow by him pierced first an elephant, then went through the open mouth of a tiger, then a deer and then a pig and then hit a monitor lizard killing instantaneously all. A statue was erected to honour the king in 1975 by Thiru Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and the Government sponsored festival (Valvil Ori Vizha) every year named after him. Apart from known abode of the Saints, the Buddhists, the Jains set up a number of retreats, those fell prey to time. A stone image of Theerthangar reminds the existence of the earlier Jain influence. The famous Shiva Temple called Arappaleeswarar Temple dating back to 12th century situates at periakoviloor near the famous waterfalls Akasa Gangai. Reportedly an ancient and powerful deity called Kolli Paavai of Ettukkai Amman is also at Kolli Hills. It attracts large pilgrims on few moon days originally a Jain retreat. The glory of Kolli Hills and the Charity of the King Valvil Ori is liberally sung by the Sangam literature like Agananooru, Purananooru, Kurunthogai,

Water Falls – Akasa Gangai

Akasa Gangai is an enchanting 300 feet waterfall of river Aiyaru, located near Arappaleeswarar temple. Thousands of steps lead down to the falls. It is situated in a beautiful valley surrounded by the mountains at all sides. Enroute, the natural beauty of the valley and the vegetation-covered peaks. The location is ideal for trekking and the breeze is pleasant, the cascade of silvery water touching and brushing the innumerable herbs which are abound in Kolli hills keeps everyone spell bound and fresh with its herbal qualities.

Flora and Fauna

The wilds of Kolli Hills are known for their medical herbs and plants. The vast expanse of forests of Kolli Hills boasts varieties of rare medical plants and these are regular sources for the preparation of indigenous Indian Medicines. Major tree species are Neem, Veepaloai, Usil, Velvel, Neermathi, Tamarind, Seetha Odai, Naval, Illupai., Silver Oak etc. Lemon grass is also prominent in most of the Reserve Forest areas. Wild animals like Rabbit, Wild boar, Bear, Hare, Peacock, Jackal, Jungle cat, Monkeys and variety of birds are seen in forest.

Arappaleeswarar Temple

A Shiva temple in the Valappur Nadu situated on the stream Aiyaru. Its is dedicated to Arppalleeswarar. The deity's other names are Thiru Arappalli Ashavar, Thiru Arappalli Mahadhevan and Thiru Arappalli Udaiyar, The Deity's consort is Archalai. It is a 12th century temple. Valli Amman, also known as Sucmathamba, and Thayammai. Because of the belief that Arppalleeswarar resides in the small fish of Aiyaru, the temple has also the name of Fish temple. It is customary for the pilgrims to catch the sacred fish by hand, adorn them with gold or silver nose rings in fulfillment of vows. The Hindu legends of the temple's origin claim that the lingam in the main shrine was unearthed during the ploughing of a field. The scar on its top is supposed to have been caused by the plough.

India has emerged as the fastest-growing market in Asia in terms of international tourist spending. India has incredible Monuments, Forts, Palaces, Temples, Beaches, Water Falls, Wild Life Sanctuaries, Memorials, Music, Dance and Culture. There is vibrancy of the culture, both ancient and modern. Indian culture is considered to be amongst the world's oldest, richest and most diverse. Many travellers have come here and been enchanted by its natural beauty, splendor, beliefs, philosophies and practices. India is one country all men long to see, and having seen it once, would not give up that glimpse for all the wonders of the world. This results in increase in Foreign Exchange Reserves.

The tourism potential of our country, especially in a global context, remains far from realized. Towards realization of this potential, the Ministry of Tourism envisages a target of 12% growth rate in inbound as well as domestic tourists for the 12th Five year Plan period. It is projected that with this growth rate, the sector will generate 2.5 crores additional jobs. The Tourism Ministry has launched the —Clean India Campaign recently. The objective of the Campaign is to ensure an acceptable level of cleanliness and hygiene at various public places. It involves sensitizing all sections of the society on the importance of cleanliness and hygiene in public places. The Campaign will be a blend of persuasion, education, training, demonstration and sensitization of all segments of our society.

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