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The Green Traveller's Guide To God's Own Country



Anoop Menon | Published: 02nd June 2017 06:00 AM



Coconut Lagoon

Coconut Lagoon

CGH Earth's stunning heritage property does not compromise on opulence to minimise its carbon trail. At this 30-acre backwater island, accessible only by boat, guests will be treated to abundant green vistas from their transplanted 19th-century bungalows and mansions. "To spread the word about this fading Vembanadu biosphere, we encourage our patrons, especially children, to join us on a guided journey through the largest wetland eco-system in India, with emphasis on introducing its indigenous flora and fauna," says general manager Samboo G. Having amassed dozens of international, national and state-level awards in eco-tourism, Coconut Lagoon's list of eco-conservation initiatives can fill a five-page document! They range from: a two-acre rainwater harvesting plant (which is their only source of water); biomass digester (produces chemical-free fertilisers); sewage water plant (which processes 1,00,000 litres every day used for gardening) and a weekly plastic eradication programme to clean-up the neighbouring grama-panchayat. Heritage bungalows from `10,670 onwards. Details: 0484 3011711



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Uravu Bamboo Grove

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Located on the outskirts of the picturesque Thrikkaipetta village and surrounded by rice fields, Uravu Bamboo Grove is a defunct quarry re-designed by an Indian-Swiss architects collective called IN:CH. Constructed by locals, the innovatively-planned accommodations are built using environment-friendly materials like palm, bamboo and mud. This community-oriented retreat has eco-consciousness etched into its very heart. Besides using hyperlocally-sourced organic vegetables and solar energy wherever possible, sustainable practices at the resort also include rainwater harvesting, pineapple bio-fencing and waste segregation. "Tourism is only one aspect of what we do. We are heavily involved in community development (supporting 100 families) and employment generation via bamboo crafts," explains general manager Sivaraj Thekkayil. He adds that, beyond going on nature walks, tea tours or participating in low-energy cooking classes, their patrons are also encouraged to support these artisans who can literally 'make anything on request' by sourcing materials from their sustainable bamboo nursery, which boasts of over 40 different species. Bamboo cottages from `3,500 onwards. Details: wandertrails.com/experiential-stays



Banasura Hill Resorts

Banasura Hill Resorts

This 35-acre retreat is an eco-architectural marvel. Using the concept of vernacular construction, the resort is built entirely of mud excavated out from the very site that it stands on. Banasura is designed by renowned architect Eugene Pandala and is possibly Asia's largest 'earth' resort. In an attempt to reduce its already minuscule carbon footprint, the property now crafts furniture only with fallen wood and has a 40kW solar power system that completely powers their kitchen. Set at an altitude of 3,200 feet in the cloud-kissed ranges of Wayanad, this coffee-tea-pepper farm is ideal for travellers looking for an enriching green break. If patrons don't want to lounge around in their rustic mud rooms—which negates the need for air-conditioning even during the summer's peak—they can trek up Chembra

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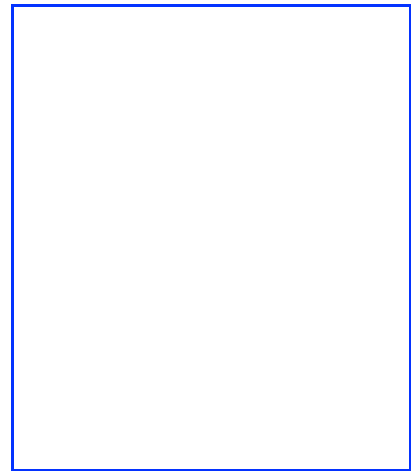
peak to learn about local flora/fauna or connect with the Kurichiya tribe."Though we currently obtain vegetables from the adjacent tribals, we're currently working on being completely self-sustained by cultivating our own produce," states corporate general manager Rajesh Vijayan. Earth rooms from `8,000 onwards. Details: 9539701354



Vythiri Resort

Vythiri Resort

This jungle getaway is hidden deep inside foggy hills garbed in green, amidst an ethereal union of caves, streams and waterfalls. Since it's situated on a 150-acre stretch of the Western Ghats rainforest—part of UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites—Vythiri Resort is very particular about its carbon footprint. "We've only converted 35-acres into the resort—including our own organic garden which provides 60 per cent of our sustenance—rest of the rainforest remains untouched. We also do not divert the three waterfalls and streams which run through our property, as it affects the ecological balance," claims corporate general manager Mathew V. Besides being an award-winning responsible tourism haven—as it promotes biodiversity, Kerala's Ayurvedic heritage and tribal crafts—the retreat is renowned amongst those seeking the solitude of tree houses. Built by members of indigenous tribes with sustainably-sourced bamboo materials and zero nails, the 80-foot-high solar-powered abodes utilise natural spring water which flows down from the surroundings hills. Tree houses from `18,000 onwards. Details: 9387555250



Ecotones Camps

Ecotones

Munnar's been hogging headlines for all the wrong reasons recently. From illegal encroachments to 11-kilometre-long uphill traffic jams during the weekends, the once-idyllic tea plantation town is quickly morphing into a traveller's nightmare. But, every cloud has a silver lining, and here it appears in the form of a nine-room boutique resort called Ecotones Camps. Nestled in the foothills of a tribal hamlet called Muthuvankudi—almost 22 kilometres away from Munnar's maddening crowd—this eco-friendly property is considered to be a must-visit for patrons who are naturalists and bird watchers because the local guides have spotted and documented 136 species of birds so far! "We firmly believe that sustainability should

include economy, communities and the environment," shares general manager Rajeev Krishna. They adhere to this by following a strict 'no-plastics' policy, treating groundwater in-house for consumption, using only low-energy lighting, hiring/training locals as staff and serving only regionally-sourced, farm-fresh fare within their reed-leaf thatched cottages. Ethnic mud houses for `8,400 onwards. Details: 9846667116

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