

## The Majestic Western Ghats

At 7.30 AM, you will be picked up from Conference Venue to drive to Malakkappara (3.5 Hour Drive) through Sholayar Forest Ranges. Return to Athirappilly for lunch . Afternoon visit Athirappilly waterfalls and go for a short trek through the river side. Early evening return to Cochin.



Athirapally waterfall nicknamed as "The Niagara of India", is situated in Thrissur district of Kerala, on the southwest coast of India. Located on the west-flowing Chalakudy River near the Vazhachal Forest Division and the Sholayar ranges, this 42-metre high waterfall and the nearby Vazhachal

Falls are popular tourist destinations. It is situated on the border of Sholayar Forests of the Western Ghats in South India. These waterfalls are perennial, and fall from an average height of 300 meters above sea level. The strikingly magnificent waterfalls of Athirapally & Vazhachal are situated at River Chalakudy, which originates at the upper ranges of the Western Ghats called Anamudi Mountains. River Chalakudy is the main river which flows down through the Vazhachal Forest Division till it reaches Athirapally & Vazhachal. The rocky riverbed at Athirapally & Vazhachal makes the river water turbulent and it gushes forward around big rocks to form segmented water cascades. The Athirapally & Vazhachal waterfalls consist of three waterfalls, the biggest of which is 42 meters high and 220 meters wide.



From the point of view of a Naturalist or Wildlife enthusiast, these waterfalls consist of 14850 hectares of tropical wet, evergreen, semi-evergreen and moist deciduous riparian forest ranges. Athirapally & Vazhachal forests is one among the five main territorial ranges of Vazhachal Forest Division, the others being Charpa, Vazhachal, Kollathirumedu and Sholayar. The protected forestland of Athirapally & Vazhachal is one among the world's top biodiversity hotspots, as it serves as a home to endangered, as well as some threatened species of flora and fauna. Athirapally & Vazhachal also draw attention of biologists because its forest

ranges are situated at a low altitude of just 300mts, which in itself a unique phenomenon in the whole of Western Ghats.. This place supports the natural riparian ecosystem and this ecosystem consists of about 319 species of flowers out of which 24 are endemic to the Western Ghats and 10 are rare and endangered. Out of 85 species of fresh water fish found in River Chalakudy, 35 are endemic and 9 are endangered species.

Forest wildlife in the area includes the Asiatic elephant, tiger, leopard, bison, sambar, and lion-tailed macaque. The unique 180 metres (590 ft) elevation riparian forest in the Athirappilly-Vazhachal area is the only location where all four South Indian species of hornbills — the Great Hornbill (the State Bird of Kerala), Malabar Pied Hornbill, Malabar Grey Hornbill, and the Indian Grey Hornbill are found living together. Plantations in the area contain teak, bamboo, and eucalyptus. It's been said that the Vazhachal forest division is the second most biodiverse area in the State. The International Bird Association has declared it an 'Important Bird Area' and the Asian Nature Conservation Foundation has recommended that the area should be declared a sanctuary or a national park. The Wildlife Trust of India says it represents one of India's best elephant conservation efforts.



The drive from Chalakudy to the Athirappilly Falls passes through a landscape of winding roads, small villages with agri farms on one side and lush green forest on the other side. The pavement to the top of the waterfalls is done nicely. The tourists are assisted by lifeguards throughout the visiting hours. This forest range is a suitable spot for trekkers which could be done from Vazhachal. Any trekking or birding programmes are strictly subject to the Forest Permissions and with a Naturalist escort for safety reasons.

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