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# Visit Krippode Village In God's Own Country

by Murli Menon

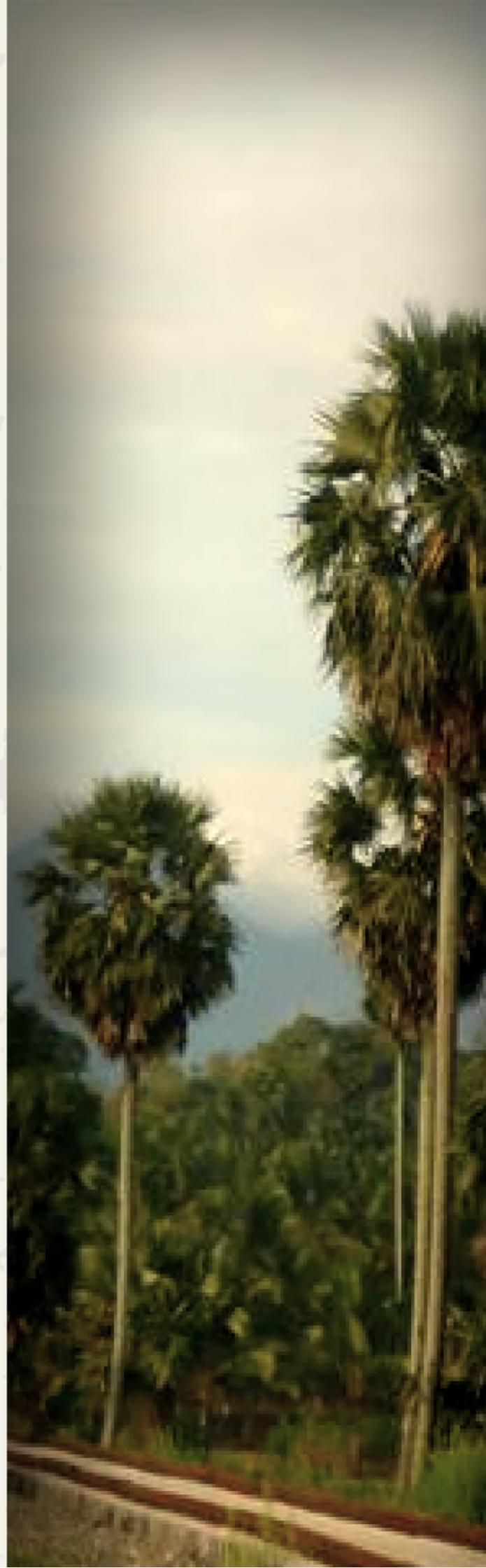


## Kerala, India

I have just returned after a close encounter with nature in the village of Karripode in the state of Kerala. Karripode is located 30 minutes drive from Palakkad, on the fringes of the “Neliampathy Hills”.

Passing through the historic village of Chittoor on the way, we are greeted by a group of Cattle Egrets flying information as we enter Palakkad. We begin our jungle safari in an open jeep and soon find ourselves in the middle of thick evergreen forests with no dwellings insight as far as the eye can see. After thirty minutes of sailing through the jungle, we saw a large body of water in the distance. Our guide informs us that the body of water is not a lake but a freshwater spring surrounded by rocks. The water is crystal clear and transparent and is surrounded on all four sides by small rocky hills.

We reached the edges of this giant lake to find hundreds of birds. It is a pleasure to observe a multitude of colourful birds up close, as they fly to the water's edge. The water is shallow and marshy and it is not possible to navigate, so one must be content to watch the birds from a distance. However, the deep blue sky, reflected in the crystal clear waters, is a joy to behold. Seeing the crimson sunset over the Parakund (in the Malayalam language for Rocky Lake), is memorable.





After a brief stop for bird watching, one heads deeper into the jungle to see the Malabar giant squirrel. After an hour of driving through the jungle, a glimpse of this magnificent creature can be seen. Malabar Giant Squirrels are black in colour but have two large elliptical brown spots, one on each side of their body, making them incredibly attractive to look at. Malabar giant squirrels are shy creatures and quickly disappear at the sound of approaching humans. So the ideal strategy for spotting these friendly and shy friends is to climb down from the tree a mile away and sneak upon them in a non-threatening manner and shoot with the zoom lens as I did. Malabar giant squirrels live in peepul trees and use their sharp teeth to eat mangoes, papayas, and jackfruit.

Karripode, situated on the border with Tamil Nadu, is a sanctuary for the Malabar giant squirrel and various other colourful birds. This extraordinary area is partially flooded with approximately 2 feet of water in the monsoon months (July-September). Once below sea level, this area was uplifted by earthworks that cut it off from the Eastern Ghats. It was divided by subsequent earthworks into flat farmland (where people can be seen growing rice) and higher ground with sandy, salt-free soil. The Malabar giant squirrel depends on the thorny thickets of the higher ground area for food. Other wildlife on Karripode includes blue bulls, wolves, hyenas, desert foxes, jackals, bobcats, and caracals.

Karripode also offers cultural experiences which will transport you to a mystical world. Getting dressed in a traditional Kerala saree for girls with jasmine flowers in the hair. Watching a traditional Kathakali dance. Learning the Kanniyarkali dance from local villagers. Traditional bathing at the village pond, fetching drinking water from a well or learning how to dehusk coconuts and rice using traditional methods.

### How to get there?

Karripoide is 15 km away far from Palakkad city. The non-stop journey from Palakkad to Karripode should not exceed thirty minutes.

By highway:

Visitors travelling by road have to drive from Palakkad to Karripode, which is about 15 km away.

By air:

The nearest airport to reach Palakkad is Coimbatore. Karripode is a 45 km drive from Coimbatore airport, which takes approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

By train:

Palakkad Railway Station is the closest railway station to reach Karripode. From Palakkad, private buses go to Karripode. All trains going to Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram via Coimbatore stop at Palakkad.





### Where to stay?

Homestays are the only option for tourists who want to visit Parakund. A family of four can avail of a homestay at very affordable prices. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner, including traditional Kerala delicacies such as idlis (a preparation made from husked and fermented black lentils and rice), dosas (a preparation, made from a semi-liquid fermented mixture of rice and beans, to which spices are added), injipuli (tamarind ginger), rice, and elisseri (pumpkin), can be home delivered from the small eateries at Karripode.

### Where to eat?

Lots of small restaurants serving Malayalee vegetarian cuisine dot Palakkad. Freshly steamed vegetables with spices cooked in coconut milk, with hot freshly steamed idlis are available at most roadside dhabas (roadside restaurants). The food at the high-profile hotels is only for the gastronomically adventurous who like greasy food. Vegans can opt for fresh tropical fruits including watermelons, papayas, tender coconuts, pineapples, which are available at the local market.



## Murli Menon ZeNLP ZeNLP - learning through stories

