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A 7 day vacation in Kodaikanal

By Vijay Chidambaram

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Hai! My name is Vijay and I live in Chennai. Chennai, though a very pleasant city in many other ways, gets intolerably hot in summer. This year, Chennai recorded the second highest temperature in two years! We were melting in our clothes.

This is why, we shouted with joy when my father told us he was taking to Kodaikanal (a hill station) for a leisurely summer vacation. Our father booked the tickets through the Internet, for our railway journey.

On May 11th, we started off our railway journey to Kodaikanal. My father explained that our train would stop at Kodai Road, from where we would take a taxi to Kodaikanal. Our train started from Chennai at 8pm on May 11th. Early next morning we arrived at Kodai Road. The air was fresh and deliciously cool. We took a taxi, an old Ambassador car. We were informed by our taxi driver that the journey would take 3 hours. On the way, I relished in seeing the beautiful scenery - tree-covered hills, village folk, and the morning sun. It was delightful. After a while, my younger brother and I began to get bored. My brother took out the walkman and began to listen to film music. I took out my trusted book, Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin by P.G.Wodehouse. After reading for sometimes, I put away my book. I told my mother that I was hungry. We stopped at a roadside restaurant, Sapeet

At Sapeet, we had light breakfast. It was a wonderful place, with domestic rabbits, lovebirds and fish.

On the fish-tank was written,

Spin around twice and drop a coin into the tank,
Like for so many people before you,
Your wish will come true!

I was amused by this little verse and peered into the tank. I could see all kinds of fish, and also, two coins! After the driver finished refilling the diesel tank of the car, we once again set off. As we traveled to Kodaikanal, we came across many little towns. As we started climbing the mountain, the air began getting cooler and cooler. As we climbed the hill on which Kodaikanal was located, we had a panoramic view of the plain below - entire towns, lakes, wide fields, they were all visible. The taxi had a FM Radio, and we listened to the songs chosen by listeners, thinking about the poor taste of majority of the listeners. Finally we arrived at Kodaikanal.

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We saw dozens of Kodaikanal natives, rushing about, clad in woolen sweaters, going about their daily lives. In Kodaikanal, we stayed in The Kodai Resort Hotel, which was a three star hotel, located centrally in Kodaikanal. My father had booked rooms in the Kodai Resort Hotel, through the internet. The check-in time for most hotels in Kodaikanal is 9 am. After we checked into the hotel, we went to our rooms, which were quite cozy. After bathing, we went to Coaker's Walk, which was quite near the Kodai Resort Hotel. It is long walk at the edge of the mountain. It gave a birds-eye view of the plains below. However, there was mist over the plains and this spoiled our view to a great degree. We returned to our hotel and had our lunch.

Then, we went to the Bryant Park, which was also quite near our hotel. We brought a Frisbee at a shop near Bryant Park. We had no idea how many hours of joyous play the Frisbee would give us. The Bryant Park was a large park, about the size of a football field. All kinds of pretty flowers grew there. There was also a great deal of empty ground, where many people were playing Frisbee. The park

was a place, where the tourists and natives of Kodaikanal relaxed and enjoyed their leisure. Big families came here and relaxed on the lawn and played Frisbee. It was a grand sight.

From the Bryant Park, we went to the Kodai Lake. The Kodai Lake is a magnificent man-made lake. It is star-shaped and has three main boat-houses. We went to the boat-house nearer to us and rented a row-boat, with a native doing the rowing. We went for a full round. The boatman took us around the lake in his boat, showing us the grand Carlton hotel, which was the only five-star hotel in Kodaikanal and also the only hotel in Kodaikanal which had its own boat-house. The boatman also showed us the Sathya Shree Sai Baba temple, where the Sai Baba was staying at the time. Because of this, Kodaikanal had more than the normal amount of tourists.

We finished our boat-ride and alighted at our boat-house. Then, my brother and I went horse-riding. There were a number of men there, who took people horse-riding for a fixed amount. We went for a full round on a horse, for one hundred and sixty rupees. The trainer of the horse would ride on a cycle, holding the reins of the horse and nudging the horse with a stick. It was a queer experience, riding on a horse. I had never before ridden on a horse. I swayed from side to side and had a sensation that I would fall off. But as the ride went on, the swaying stopped and I found myself enjoying the experience. By the time we finished our horse-ride, night had come on and we went to Hotel Austoria (which was recommended to us by the horse trainer) had our dinner there. The food was superb and I enjoyed my meal. The idlis and dosas were just like mother made! After we finished our dinner, we walked home. There were no autos and very few taxis in Kodaikanal. So we decided to walk home. However, Kodaikanal's roads were sloping, uphill and difficult to climb. So, after a strenuous bit of walking, we arrived at the hotel and retired for the night. Thus ended our first day at Kodaikanal.

On the following days, we visited a great deal of places and ate at a variety of hotels. We visited the Tibetan shops where Tibetans were selling Mats, sweaters and bags at fixed prices. Along the Kodai lake, men were renting out cycles at 10 rupees an hour. I, my brother and my father rented three cycles. My brother and I rode alone, while mother sat on the cycle with father. We coasted along the lake's circumference, enjoying the breeze and the scenery. It was fun. However, the second time, we rented the cycles at the time when Sai baba came out of the temple and so the roads were congested with people and cars. To escape the crowd, we got down from our cycles and rode on the pavement! We visited the Kodai Astro-Physics Observatory and the nature museum in Sacred Heart College. When we visited the Observatory, it was cloudy and therefore, we could not see anything with the telescope. We only visited the museum inside the Observatory grounds, which had pictures of stars and comets. Personally, I found the astro-Physics museum a bore. The Sacred heart museum was

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much more interesting. It had preserved butterflies, insects, stones and a numismatic collection. There was also the skeletal frame of a number of animals.

We visited the Silver cascade falls and the Liril Falls. The Silver Cascade was a beautiful falls, with mountain water falling down the mountain from a great height. The Liril Falls faded in comparison with the Silver Cascade. There was very little water and the waterfall more like small rapids! Our driver explained that the original name of the falls was Pambar Falls and that since an ad for Liril(a soap) had been shot there, it had been renamed Liril Falls!

We visited the Moir Point, The Upper lake view and the Palani view. We also visited the Berijam Lake. It is a beautiful lake. In order to view this lake, one has to get special permission from the forest authorities. We also visited the Neptune–Cool Rapids. In order to see the Neptune -Cool Rapids, one has to trek into the forest. It had been my first trekking experience and I enjoyed it immensely. The rapids themselves were unimpressive, but the trek was very nice and enjoyable.

We also visited many villages on the outskirts on Kodaikanal, like Manampahur. In Manampahur, we visited the Sheep and Rabbit Farm and saw Sheep grazing the grass on hills. It was a beautiful sight. We also watched Rabbits. The rabbits grown there were of the German Angora variety and were huge. It was very nice, to touch the fluffy coat of these rabbits.

We went to the Kurinji Andavar Temple and the Chettiar Park. Both were nice places. There were

many varieties of roses in the Chettiar Park. We also visited the Pine forests. There were pine trees everywhere. As we started entering the Pine forests, a man who was selling carrots warned us, "You won't get anything to eat there for hours. Come on and buy my Carrots!"

Every night, there was a campfire in the hotel park. We would go there and sit near the fire and warm ourselves. It was a treat to watch the campfire. Every couple of minutes, it would send up in the air, fresh sparks! Thus we spent every night and soon it was the 18th. On the morning of 18th, we packed our bags and checked out of Kodai Resort Hotel. It had been a delightful vacation for us. All of us felt like staying on at Kodaikanal for a few more days. However, as the saying goes, all good things must come to an end.

We traveled in a taxi to Madurai and from there, caught the Pandyan Express that night and on the next morning on 19th, we were back in hot, polluted Chennai

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Cruises Are Just More Fun!

By Thomas DeSimone

Cruise Industry at a Glance.

–The choice of taking a cruise vacation is the fastest growing choice of the travel industry – reaching more than 1,800% growth since 1970, when an estimated 1/2 million travelers took a cruise. Today more than 11 million people took a cruise vacation in 2005.

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–The cruise sectors growth is also shown in its expanding guest capacity. About 40 new ships were assembled in the 1980s and during the 1990s, nearly 80 new ships have been introduced. By the end of 2005, about 69 new ships have been introduced since 2000.

–This fast growth has ignited the continuing trend of the cruise vacation experience. Over the years, cruise liners have modified itineraries to include more diverse ports of call and convenient embarkation ports and have also introduced many onboard amenities and facilities, including Internet cafes, ice–skating rinks, multiple themed restaurants and expansive spas, health and fitness facilities.

–The cruise industry's commitment to adding new capacity is based in part on cruising's promising growth potential. Because majority of U.S. adults have never taken a cruise vacation, there remains a virtually untapped sector of the travel industry.

–Cruise lines cater to a wide variety of demographic mix. Cruisers range from 50 years of age, with above–average annual household income. Cruise vacations attract travelers from every state in the nation and from every province in Canada. The states catering to the most cruise passengers are Florida, California, Texas, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Illinois, Arizona and Georgia.

–With hundreds of destinations to choose from, no matter what vacation mood you're in cruises offers a wide variety of destinations for everyone! From the icebergs of Alaska to the hot sands of Mexico. With the world's top cruise lines at your fingertips finding your dream cruise is easy.

a Discounted WorldWide Online Cruise Agency – Any cruise, Any ship, Any cruise line, Any destination.... Always Low Rates!



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