
Theni – Gateway to Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Theni is one of the famous tourist centre in Tamilnadu. Theni is called by the names – ‘Gateway to Tourism’, ‘The Hidden Paradise in Earth’ Resounding cascades, silver – lined clouds resting a top billiard green hill tops, sheer rock faces and temples of antiquity are the stuff that distinguish the tourism destinations of the Theni District.¹ These unique places warm the soul and provide the much – needed balm to the mind. Theni District in the southern part of Tamilnadu is one among the choicest tourist delights and destinations with a delightful mixture of tourist attractions such as captivating dams, waterfalls and countless pilgrim centers dams, waterfalls and countless pilgrim centers.

INTRODUCTION

Theni has many tourist attractions to offer. The Vaigai Dam, Sothupparati Dam and Shanmuganathi Dam are some lovely picnic spots. There are many idyllic waterfalls such as Surulifalls, Kumbakkarai falls and Chinna Suruli falls.² Theni boasts of many temples and shrines and is a famous Hindu pilgrim. Devotees from all over India come to pay homage at Kuchanur, Mavoothu, Theertha Thotti, Gowmariamman Temple, Devadanapatti Kamakshi Amman Temple and Balasubramanya Temple. Other places of tourist interest in Theni are Meghamalai Hills, Bodi Mettu and the Paravasulagam water themepark. Theni Town in the district Head Quarters known as the “Second Manchester of South India”

Which indicates the various cotton trade. Three Hydro power station namely Periyar, Surlier and Vaigai Micro Hydro Power Station generate electricity in this district.³

Theni District is a district of TamilNadu State in South East India. The city of Theni is the district head quarters. The district is divided into two natural division. The hilly areas longitude. Central constituted by parts of the three taluks Periyakulam , Uthamapalayam and Andipatti with

thick vegetation and Perennial Streams from the hills on the western side and Cumbum valley which lies in Uthamapalayam taluk. Bodinayakanur were also created with effect from January 1997. ⁴

GEOGRAPHY :-

The 2,889 km² (1,115 sq mi) district lies at the foot of the Western Ghats between 9' 39' and 10' 30' North latitude and between 77' 00' and 78' 30' of East location: 10°04'N 77°45'E. The district is bounded by Dindigul District to the North, Madurai District to the South west and Idukki District of the Kerala State to the west. The district is home to Theni, Periyakulam, Bodinayakanur, Andipatti, Thevaram, Pottipuram, Ramakrishnapuram. A range of hills which runs parallel to western Ghats from North to South Separate it from the neighbouring state of Kerala. Theni District holds Nature's beauty with spicy green ornaments, historical temples and famous waterfalls. Theni District warmly welcomes throughout the year and feasting the eyes of its visitors.

Tourist Spot :-

Theni is one of the famous Tourist centre in Tamil Nadu. There are so many places to visit in Theni District.

Vaigai Dam :-

The Vaigai Dam is built across the Vaigai river near Andipatti in the Theni District of Tamil Nadu. It Provides water for irrigation for the Madurai District and the Dindigul District as well as drinking water to Madurai and Andipatti Vaigai Dam was inaugurated on 21 January 1959 by then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Mr. K. Kamaraj Near the dam, the Government of Tamilnadu has constructed an Agricultural Research Station. Vaigai Dam measures 111 feet in height and can store water upto 71 feet with a total storage capacity of 6,143 moft. The Dam is maintained by water Resources Department which in turn managed by the TamilNadu Public Works Department Vaigai Hydro Electric Power Plant was design capacity of 6 MW. It has 2 units of 3 MW each. The first unit was Commissioned in 1990. It is Operated by TamilNadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited (TANGEDCO). It is one of the 104 dams in TamilNadu

that is proposed to be improved under the dam Rehabilitation and Improved under the Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP)

Suruli Falls:-

Suruli Falls is located 56 km from Theni and 10 km from Cumbum in the Theni District. It is a two stage Cascading water fall. The Suruli river supplying the falls originates from the Megamalai mountain range. The falls drop from a height of 150 feet gathers into a pool, flows for a short distance and again plummets an additional 40 feet. The beauty of this falls finds mention in the ancient tamil epic, Silappathikaram written by the Poet Ilango Adigal. Near Suruli falls are 5 caves which represent Indian Rock – Cut architecture of the 11th Century.

On the Suruli river, the water is said to act as medicine and cure diseases. It is one of the major tourist attraction in Theni district and draws tourists from different parts of the State particularly during the south west monsoon – June – October is the best season due to monsoon activity, though there is some flow year round. Construction of a bridge across the Suruli River at a cost of Rs.45 Lakhs has increased tourist flow to the falls significantly.

Kumbakkarai Falls :-

Kumbakkarai Falls are lesser known falls in the foot hills of the Kodaikanal Hills. They are located at $10^{\circ} 10' 48''$ N $77^{\circ} 31' 50''$ E / 10.18000° N $77. 53056^{\circ}$ E in Dindigal district, 9 kilometers from Periyakulam . Kumbakarai falls are located along the Kodai – Vellagavi Periyakulam foot path. The water Originates in Kodaikanal hills and flows along the rocks and finally reaches the foot hills. The water flows throughout the year, but in rainy seasons the flow will be very heavy. The present day Kumbakarai which is tourist spot was nothing but a forest with waterfalls. Thiru K. Chellam Iyer an affluent business man of Periyakulam wanted Kumbakarai water falls to be one another tourist Spot similar to Courtallam. He obtained Permission of the British Government in 1942 and constructed dressing rooms , staircases and bathing spots in that area at his own expense and Kumbakarai waterfalls soon turned out to be a tourist spot. Inscription at Kumbakarai waterfalls speaks about his contribution to the falls. ⁵

Sothuparai Dam :-

Sothuparai Dam is 9 km from Periyakulam on the foot of Kodaikanal hills or the Western Ghats of Palani range ; helps enrich the entire area of Periyakulam and beyond of Periyakulam and beyond by run as a perennial river varaganathi. The catchment of the dam is a combine of rain and small streams of Kodaikanal hills and the release of water from 13 erijam lake , Kodaikanal . The Dam at its full storage capacity of 2.831m. The name Sothuparai is combine to two tamil words meaning foot and rock and it is said to derive from the habit of people here who once used to take food on the rock boulders along the flow of river varaganathi. The water released from the dam through an irrigation canal runs like a stream among the rocks and boulders. Sothuparai is the Aecond highest dam in TamilNadu , following the Sholayar Dam of valparai which comes first The dam has a small tunnel and irrigation canal and only during the heavy inflow the shutter seems to open large. ⁶

Other interesting Places :-

Apart from these the Manjalar dam is a dam across the manjalar river in Theni district. Manjalar dam has been Constructed for irrigation purposes. It is also a famous tourist spot Meghamalai popularly called High Wavy mountains is a cool and misty mountain range situated in the Western Ghats in Theni district , Tamilnadu near Kumaly Idukki District . Tiger falls near Bodimettu is a tourist spot . South India It is a Place of natural beauty dotted with Cardamom Plantations to a estates⁷ Mullai Periyar Dam, Chinna Suruli are also famous tourist centre. The main attraction in Mavoothu is the Vellappar Temple. This holy shrine is situated in the varushanad hill ranges, 20 kms from Andipatti. Rainwater gathers around the mango trees near this temple and flows down hill in torrents. ⁷ This place has given the name ‘ Mavoothu ’which in tamil stands for “spring of the mango grove”. the famous pilgrim centres are Devadanapatti temple, Periyakulam Arulmigu Balasubramanya temple constructed by Rajendra Chola nearly 2000 years ago, Kannagi temple, Kanneeswara mudaliyar temple , Veerapandi , Chinnamanur Saneeswarar temple, Bodinayakkanur Paramasivan temple, Suruli falls near Suruli Andavar temple, Theni Bathrakaliamman temple, Allinagaram Veerappa Ayyanar temple , Rayappanpatti Snow Madha Church , Uthamapalayam Periyapallivasal is famous pilgrim centres. The tourists who come to visit the tourist places will visit the pilgrim centres too. ⁸

TOURIST ARRIVALS IN THENI DISTRICT

The Number of tourist arrival in Theni District rose by 20.1 per cent in 2012. Meanwhile, to boost the sector further the Government is formulating a new Tourism policy in Tamil Nadu and to take up Rs.500 crore worth project, with Asian Development Bank (ADB's) assistance. According to Tourism Departments 2013-14 policy note, ADB has been formulated the Technical Assistance (TA) program to enhance the capacities of tourism department and other implementing agencies in Tamilnadu.⁹ Total outlay of ADB assisted project is around 100 million (around Rs 500 crore) for the period of five years. The project will be funded through the assistance of ADB to an extent of 70 percent (around Rs.350 crore) and balance 30 percent (around Rs.150 crore) through state funds. The Southern circuit – (pilgrimage and ECO circuit) covering Madurai, Theni, Dindigul, Ramanathapuram, Sivagangai, Virudhunagar, Thirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Ooty and Kanyakumari District.¹⁰

Theni District

S.No	Name of the place	Type
1	Vaigai Dam	Little Brindavan
2	Mavoothu	Pilgrim Tourism spring of the mango grove
3	Vellappar Temple	Pilgrim Tourism
4	Balasubramaniya Temple	Brahma theertha
5	Sothupparai Dam	Leisure tourism
6	Kumbakkarai Falls	Jewel in the crown of Tamilnadu
7	Kannagi Temple	Pilgrim Tourism
8	Veerapandi	Pilgrim Tourism
9	Suruli Falls	Leisure tourism
10	Meghamalai	Mountain tourist
11	Vellimalai	Mountain tourist
12	Chinna Suruli	Cloud land falls
13	Mullaiperiyar Dam	Trans – basin
14	Bodimettu	Domestic Tourist site
15	Tiger falls	Puli Aruvi

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Thus Theni is the part and parcel of tourist spot in Tamilnadu. The tourism department also planned to improve tourist arrivals in Theni District. The climate conditions, dams, falls, mountains in this area will attract not only domestic tourist but also foreign tourist too.

END NOTES

- i. Report from the collection of Tourist Department dated 25 October, 1986, p.8
- ii. Report from the Chief Engineer, Irrigation, Public works Department, Theni.
- iii. Report of the National Committee on Tourism, Government of India, New Delhi, 1990.
- iv. Report of the Public Work Department, Theni, 2000.
- v. Public Works Department, File No.316/4, Vol.III, Madras, 1987.
- vi. Tourist Guide to Theni District, Department of Tourism, Government of Tamilnadu, Theni, 2001.
- vii. Memorandum of District Tourism Promotion Council, Government of Tamilnadu, 78/2002.
- viii. Theni District statistical handbook 2001 – 2002.
- ix. Chravathy, M., *History of South India*, New Delhi, 1990, p.87.
- x. Ibrahim, R., *Irrigation and its development in Tamil kingdom*, Calcutta, 2002, p.22.