

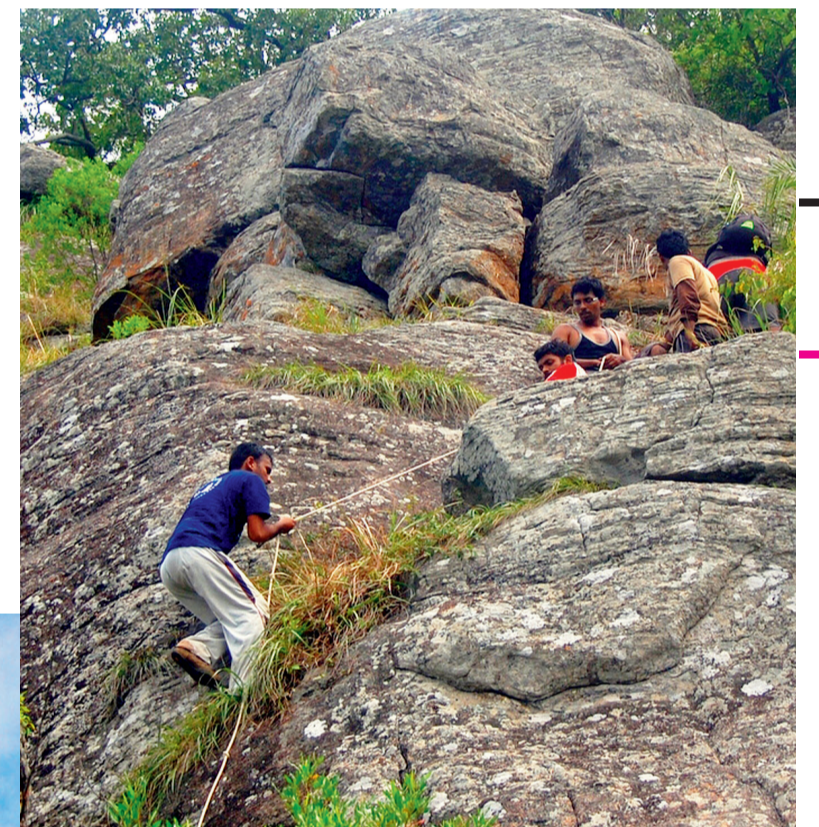
## For the trek of a lifetime

Adventurous people with adrenaline surging through their veins are now heading to Tiruchirappalli for quick getaways in and around the city. DURAI MURUGAN finds out how these people fuel their desire to explore nature in its raw form...

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re you on the lookout for a picturesque hill station for a weekend retreat? After hopping through 70 hairpin bends and rubbernecking panoramic human settlements, farms and the sprawling green carpet, one gets to catch a glimpse of Kollidam Hills, which forms a significant share of the mighty Eastern Ghats in Tamil Nadu. A person with a determined heart, synced with athletic legs and with an adrenaline rush, can boast of trekking along the ridges and the valleys that start from Puliancholai village and enjoy the luxury of landscapes and verdure.

Once one reaches these hills, a sense of achievement and satisfaction reigns one's mind. Ever captured the essence of the phrase "on cloud nine"? You will, when you let your limbs to weep in pain under the cascading falls after trekking so long and hard! What amuses a townie who outdoors on this charming hill is its quietude, a chance to count the twinkling stars and the glimpses of these hills which sneak into the subconscious mind!



### ARAPPALEESWARAR TEMPLE

Atop these magnificent hills is the Arappaleeswarar Temple. Apart from blessings from God, what I can vouch for are the appetising herbal soups made from chosen herbal plant roots that can effortlessly energise any tired body and mind. It's impossible to stop with just one cup.

### AKASH GANGA WATERFALLS

A kilometer-long walk, down the steep steps from Arappaleeswarar temple takes you to the famous 'Akash Ganga' waterfall of the Kollidam hills. A dip in the gelid waters of the 300-foot high Akash Ganga falls, gives a soothed, enchanted and mesmerised feeling. It goes without saying, that this place has won the admiration of almost all nature lovers and adventurers. Trekking to top of the Akash Ganga waterfall appeases the adrenaline rush of adventurers and the breath-taking views of this place calms the inner self.

### PULIANCHOLAI BASE OF KOLLI HILLS

Puliancholai is a place where rain water collected in the Kollidam hills drains through the main stream and meets the plains. It is a place to splash, dive and swim in Adam's ale which is quite hard to find in busy metros, feel the humongous boulders and check out all the wonderful places to pitch tents and stay peacefully, listening to the rhythm of water lashing at the rocks.



### SIRUMALAI HILLS

Murky clouds, magical mist, sky-penetrating peaks, yummy fruits, friendly people, serene estates, tweeting birds and the climate are memories which readily strikes one when thinking about this sparsely populated tourist place. From trekking, boating, cycling, biking, and bird-watching, to admiring nature, this out-crop of the Western Ghats offers almost everything a nature lover and an adventure seeker asks for. Vellimalai peak in the Sirumalai hills is 1,350 above mean sea-level and also has a temple on it. The peak is a rocky, wind-swept place which provides awe-inspiring views of

the entire Sirumalai hills and this will definitely be one of the best memories that will stay with a traveller forever. In addition, the 'out of the world' experience that this place gives you, is something that you can be proud of for the rest of your life!

### KUTLADAMPATI WATERFALLS

Flowing through the lush herb rich terrain of the Sirumalai hills is this seasonal waterfall that drops from a height of 25 metres and rejuvenates people who through it to get drenched. This waterfall is at the southern base of the Sirumalai hills and can be accessed from Vadipatti.