

## Below was our plan

**Saturday(9/10/11)** Shimoga -> Jog -> Talaguppa -> Honnemaradu -> Talaguppa -> Gokarana (Stay at Gokarana)

**Sunday(9/11/11)** Gokarana -> Srisi -> Yana -> Sirsi -> Udupi(stay at Udupi)

**Monday(9/12/11)** Udupi -> Someshwara(water sports) -> Agumbe -> Sakrebailu -> Mandagagge(Bird sanctuary) -> Gajanur(Tunga Dam) -> Shimoga(head back to Bangalore)

We(I and Wife(Veena) started from our respective offices at 2.30 PM on Friday. Veena took her office bus to station directly whereas I took a BMTC Volvo. We met at station around 3.30 PM. Platform #9 and found the train and our seats. After making my big backpack cozy on the luggage rack, we headed out to the platform to have some snacks(lays :) and hot tea(Veena was having head ache:()).

Train left Bangalore at 4.30 PM. The train coaches were newly installed with TV sets, but the volume on the speaker was too low or was the gang of people around us increasing the decibel level?. Either way, the tv was playing local Kannada songs and we were least interested(Venki would have enjoyed am sure ;-)). The journey was a long 5.30 hours and we could keep up our energy only because of the excitement about the whole trip thing.

Reached Shimoga at 10 pm, took an auto to Durga lodge. Thanks to Shreyas(my friend and colleague), he had booked a room for us. Had dinner(chapati oota) at a mess next to Durga lodge. The room was pretty big and Veena was stunned at the rent(400 Rs per day, someone find me a hut in Bangalore please!). I had this dream since 3 years to stay at a hotel and watch tv :P. So, finally my dream came true and I switched on the TV. But, hey wait, someone hijacked it and is watching Z TV (kids song show). Oops, Veena had remembered that its Friday 10.30 PM, the moment I started browsing the channels :( Finally we watched Azmat sing and slept off at 11.30 PM.



(PIC: Durga Lodge, Shimoga)

5.45 AM, Saturday morning, we woke up got ready by 6.30 AM. Had bread jam for breakfast as the restaurant at the lodge did not have the breakfast ready. But, we had tasty tea and checked out of the hotel, reached the private bus stand at Shimoga. Yes, in Shimoga private bus operators dominate over KSRTC. We started on a direct bus to Jog at 7.45 AM. Reached Jog at 10 AM as promised by the bus operator(They are the most punctual people!). Hired a taxi to go around Jog. He took us to the place water starts dropping(mungaru male spot is what it is called off-late), to Rani falls and back to main Jog falls. We enjoyed Rani falls the most because it's the only place you actually get to touch water, sad part is we couldn't get to play much because of heavy rainfall that started just about when we reached that place. Locals told that we could get a direct bus to Gokarana and we waited and boarded that bus.



(PICs: Jog Falls at 10 AM)

The bus conductor advised us to get down at Kumta and take another bus to Gokarana(There is a local bus playing every 30 mins between Kumta and Gokarana). We got down at Kumta, had these "buns" for lunch and boarded another bus to Gokarana. Since it was a local bus, it stopped every 2 kms as though the bus had some automatic stop button. 25 kms drive took about 1.30 Mins and we reached Gokarana bus stand at 4.30 PM. We were totally exhausted because of the whole journey traversing through western Ghats and were waiting to reach the hotel. Took an auto to "Namaste Kafe", i know, the resort name sounds as though its inviting western people. On reaching, we found that it was indeed full of westerners. The resort is situated just next to the "Om" beach and whole scene was very refreshing and welcoming. We forgot all the restlessness and exhaustion the moment we saw the beach. Quickly checked in, had some hot tea(300 ml of tea, can you imagine in Bangalore? :)) freshened ourselves and ran to the beach. Man, this place was a total different world, away from all the office tension in the concrete jungle. Beach line ran for almost a kilometer and was full of rocks. The place was just fine, with few people(around 50-60) unlike many commercial beaches that have more population they can accommodate. We played in the beach, walked along the beach line, sat on the rocks staring at the beach, took a couple of snaps and came back to the restaurant by 7.30 PM. Had gobi Manchurian, finger chips and soup for dinner in full leisure and headed back to the beach for another quick walk. This time, it was much different experience as it was one day before full moon day and the moon started playing hide and seek between the clouds. Whenever the moon used to appear, it used to light up the whole beach and the beach line was looking like white shining water. We enjoyed the walk, came back took the "300" ml tea and sat at the rocks again for some time. Went to bed at 10 PM as we had to start early the next day.







(PICs: Gokarana)

Our morning started at 5.30 AM(it had been like this for all the 3 days and surprisingly Veena dint crib about it!). we got ready by 6.30 AM and called for the auto. Our plan was to visit murudeshwar, visit updupi Krishna Mata and stay back at Udupi for the night. We got a direct bus till Murudeshwar, this was very unexpected and if not for the Auto driver's presence of mind, we would have missed this and had to travel for extra 1-2 hours. The auto driver so helpful, in the pursuit of the direct bus for us, he even dropped the 50 Rs note a few meters back from the bus stop and drove us to the, bus made sure we boarded the bus and then apparently picked up the 50 Rs note(I verified this after calling him once we boarded the bus). C'mon, find me an auto driver this helpful in Bangalore. I bet not 1 in a 1000 would even bother about your schedule. I thanked him and felt the sense of satisfaction that he was able to pick up the fallen 50 Rs. We reached murudeshwar at 9 AM, had quick breakfast (but heave one comprising 1 masala dosa, 1 plate poori and 1 plate upma :P. Everything for me ended with a tea), visited the temple and the

beach in next 1 hour. We hired an auto to the highway and took a bus to Udupi from there. On the way to Udupi, an idea struck me and turned out to be a great one once it worked out. Our plan was to go for white water river rafting at Someshwara the next day. So, staying in Agumbe would make our life very easy the next day. So, Instead of staying back at Udupi, we booked a room in Agumbe. Reached Udupi lish in the noon. Visited the " Udupi Krishna Mata", had lunch and started to Agumbe at around 3.30 PM.







(PICS: Murudeshwara)

The drive to Agumbe was the most memorable experience. As we were approaching Someshwara(8 kms from Agumbe) the weather changed suddenly. From all sun to all clouds, from no rainfall to heavy rainfall. This is why I guess people call Agumbe as "Chirapunji of the south". As we reached Someshwara, Veena watched the river "Sita" following ferociously, that moment Veena cancelled the "river rafting" activity the very next morning as we thought its completely risky since we were in no position to take any risk whatsoever. Then the "hair pin" bends started. It was like you climb 75 mts at a 75'degree elevation, take a U-turn and again climb up at the same elevation. This kept repeating and we had to hold our breath in every turn. We were amazed at the guts these drivers had doing this kind of stunt numerous times a day. Finally the climb up was over and we reached Agumbe. On the contrary to my imagination, Agumbe is not at all commercialized. It's very small village comprising less than 50 families, 4 hotels and a few grocery stores. You can't get anything else there, period. The lodge that we booked was right next to the bus stand, we checked in and came back to the bus stand to reach the "sun set point". Had tea at the bus stand hotel, hired an auto and left for the "sun set point". The journey was full of potholes and took almost 30 mins to reach the spot. A bunch of tourists were already on the spot. The view was just amazing, we stood there staring at the line of mountains that had formed a line of mist which was making them look like snow cladded mountains. We could recollect "Isle of sky, scotlands" at that moment, Veena mentioned that this place is much better than that, I felt sense of pride as I always wanted to show the scenic places in Shimoga district. We returned back to Agumbe. The hotel manager informed us of a "Venugopala temple" inside the village and we walked to the place. Temple was open but the priest had not yet come to perform the evening puja. We waited for him sitting outside temple for around 15 mins when some bells sounds started coming from inside. Veena was dumbstruck thinking that something is going on inside the temple but there was no-one inside it. At one point she wanted to head back to the hotel, but out of nowhere the priest appeared from inside the temple(we later found that there is a broken wall inside the temple and priest had come through that since it mostly was a shortcut for him :D ). After the puja, we headed back to the lodge. On the way back we started enquiring about eateries and someone mentioned about "neer dosa", suddenly I remembered about Shreyas mentioning about this while I was planning for the trip. We had neer dosa and buns for dinner followed by tea :), came back to the lodge thinking about what we could plan for the next day as our current plan of rafting was cancelled. One of the locals told us that Sringeri was about 25 kms from Agumbe. Veena's spiritual mind took over and we decided to head towards Sringeri. Packed everything back to my new backpack(I was proud at the luggage it could take :P) and slept off at 9.30 PM.





(PICS at Agumbe)

Next morning, we woke up at 7 AM, took a walk around Agumbe. While walking we spotted a beautiful water stream, played there for 10 mins, took some snaps and moved ahead. Then we reached the "Guruprasad" hotel, our lodge manager had mentioned about this and we thought having our morning tea there. It was maintained by an old couple and Veena decided to give them some business. We had Neer dosa again and headed back to the lodge. Quickly got ready and waited for the bus to "Sringeri". The bus arrived at 8.45 AM and was fully packed. We were stuffed inside and had to stand holding the railings. It was one of its kind of 25 km journey that we experienced. Though there was no space literally inside the bus, the conductor somehow made way for everyone who waved at the bus. School kids, office goers, everybody started getting in. at one point it had become so crowded that we need not/could not hold any railings. People themselves were supporting each other. However, the best part about the people in that region is they enjoy the ride making fun of each other or the conductor. They were so energetic that, given a chance I would advise every BMTC traveller Bangalorean to take ride in that bus on

a Monday morning and learn some patience from them. We reached "Sringeri" at about 10 AM(again, this is what the conductor promised). Visited the temple and the river. This is one of the most beautiful temple I have ever visited and river flowing very silently next to the temple adds to the beauty. The river was in full flow and the water was so cold, it was as good as refrigerated water. We were done with Sringeri and were thinking about our plan for the rest of the day, just when Veena's spiritual mind again took over and we decided to visit Horanadu though I was not fully convinced thinking of the time it takes to reach there and head back to Shimoga to board our train. It would take about 3 hours to reach Horanadu and 4.30 Hours to reach Shimoga again. Anyhow, we decided to go for it. That moment we were out of the temple premises and as though it was all planned a bus to Horanadu halted right next to the temple. If not for this bus, it would have taken us a walk of 30 mins to the bus stand and another 15 to 30 mins to wait for the next bus. This was a clear signal to me that this is indeed possible and finally was able to convince myself and started enjoying the ride. It was again a picturesque ride between the mountains and river "Bhadra" was like coming with us till Horanadu without ticket. At one point Veena was making fun that she wanted to levy some fine for it for travel without ticket. As we moved closer to Horanadu, mountains with forest started converting to mountains with tea and coffee plantation. For me, it was the first time I was witnessing the tea and coffee plantation and it was such a beauty. All 3 hours flew when we were still praising at the beauty of the nature and were planning to buy a house somewhere and convert it to a homestay :) (blame our real estate mind :))



(PICS at Sringeri)

We reached Horanadu at around 1 PM. This place is surrounded by mountains all around and looks picture perfect. It cannot be captured in the cameras, you just have to feel it by paying a visit to it in person. We visited the annapoorneshwari temple, had lunch and started back to Shimoga. Reached Shimoga at 7 PM. We had our train back to the concrete jungle at 10 PM and Veena wanted to end this trip with perfection. So we decided to have a very good dinner and started searching for a restaurant. We dined at "Hotel Panchami", and per our thought of a perfect dinner, the food was tasty. Finished our dinner by having deserts, did some sweets shopping(it's a mandate in my team to get sweets if you are away for more than 2 days :)) and headed for the train station.



(PICS at Horanadu)

Train started on time, (boy, did I want that train to be cancelled so that we could stay back for one more day? :P) and reached Bangalore at 4 AM. We reached home at 5 AM, slept for an hour and this is me signing off at 12.04 PM(13/9/2011) hoping to do one more similar trip soon.