

# The Sparsa effect

A resort in Thiruvannamalai that introduces urban warriors to serenity and the simple life

in and around



FTEN, there is a dearth of fine accommodation in and around holy sites. Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple is a classic example where tourists invariably have to put up with cheap lodging options available in the temple area or take up expensive rooms on the outskirts. This demand for more viable options has led groups such as the Auromatrix Hotels Pvt Ltd to set up resorts that rejuvenate the spirit and offer a family vacation.

Sparsa is one such resort, located in the idyllic Thiruvannamalai. Also known as Arunachala, Thiruvannamalai is about 190 kms from Chennai — a three-hour journey by road — and is known for its history of sages like Ramana Maharishi, Sheshadri Swami and Yogi Ramsuratkumar, as well as its temples.

With thatched roofs, stone walls, the greenest plants, cool breeze and plenty of space, Sparsa has an instant calming effect. A cold towel and scented flowers help you unwind, while tender coconut water soothes parched throats. Each cottage has four rooms, meticulously designed and functional.



Little touches like black rock stone bathroom floors and little clay pots holding creams and talc, give the rooms a rustic feel.

All cottages are equipped with modern amenities like air conditioning, LCD TVs, a writing desk, coffee maker and a mini fridge. And there's 24-hour room service for the hungry vacationer.

The restaurants are equally

## What to eat

You'll find refreshments like herbal soup, keera soup, together with keera vada, Malabar paratha, coconut rice, biryani and even a rather sweet Spaghetti Neapolitan on the menu. Senior Sous Chef Shajahan and food consultant Aandavan Kadir have drawn up an extensive list but fresh juices, tempered buttermilk, *pal paniyaram* and Kumbakonam degree coffee are hot favourites. Breakfast is about Rs 150 per person, with lunch and dinner priced at Rs 350 each. Do not leave the place without tasting their pongal.

**Tariff:** Single rooms cost Rs 3,000; double rooms Rs 3,500; and a pool side villa Rs 5,000 (exclusive of taxes).  
Details: 24988634



quaint — the Annamalai teashop serves 'chai' country style, and a flower shop sells jasmines and roses. 'Minna', the parrot, predicts your future and you may feed it with maize and rice (I'm told it is partial to *sambar* rice). There is a meditation and puja mandapam, library, recreation centre and health club, as well as internet facilities. Children can try their hand at pottery or head out on bullock-cart rides. There are vintage bikes at your disposal to take on a spin to the city. Tamil sign boards are liberally used and people greet each other with a traditional *vanakkam* and a smile. The spacious banquet hall and open-air theater are ideal for hosting parties.

And when you need to relax even further, treat yourself to a foot massage or a plunge into the pool near-

by. The security is first rate — you'll find yourself talking walks close to mid night. The 'No to smoking, alcohol and plastic' policy is something else that will encourage you to return to this place. We also learn that two other resorts of this kind will be coming up in Kanyakumari and Chidambaram.

Like bottled water we will soon be buying peace and quiet, and a stay at Sparsa is the first step towards that. This is one place that is easy to find but difficult to leave.

— Parveen Sikkandar



## SAVE THIS

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