

Design Resource

Janardanaswamy Temple - Varkala

Town of Temples

by

Abhey Singh

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/janardanaswamy-temple-varkala>



1. Introduction

2. Place

3. People

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Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/janardanaswamy-temple-varkala/introduction>

Introduction

Varkala is a small town in the Thiruvananthapuram district of south Kerala. It has grown over time as a favourite backpacker's hangout in Kerala. Despite its backpacker vibe, it is essentially a temple town with a 2000 year old temple - Janardanaswamy temple- dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It is one of the oldest Vaishnavite shrines in south India. Apart from the temple, Papanasam beach is considered a holy place where Hindus come to offer offerings to the passed loved ones.



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Place

Varkala is a town in the Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. It is located on Arabian sea shore, about 50 km northwest of Thiruvananthapuram and 37 km south of Kollam. It is a well known tourist destination, popular for its beaches, ayurvedic treatment centres and Janardan temple. It is a unique place in terms of its geology. It is the only place in south Kerala to have hills along the beach. This unique formation is called Varkala formation and is declared a geological monument by Geological Survey of India.



The pond outside the temple area.

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The entrance to the temple.



The road going from Varkala town to beach.



Houses along the beach area.



Shops selling souvenirs.

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Stairs to the temple main entrance.

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People

People of Varkala are conservative in religious affairs yet modern in social issues. Kerala has one of the highest literacy rate in the country. Yet there are strict rules which one has to follow inside the temple. Males have to remove any upper-garment and people belonging to other religions are not allowed inside the main sanctum. Also, there are specific rules for the prayer ceremony. Four prayers are conducted each day. The chief priest for the prayers has to be an outsider. Travel industry provides most of the jobs in the Varkala area.



Devotees and tourists walking up the stairs of the temple entrance.

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Shop inside the temple area selling prayer ingredients.



Devotees praying at Lord Ganesha temple.



Priests during the prayer ceremony.



Main priest performing the prayer ceremony.

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People queuing up to get prasadam after the prayer ceremony.



Devotee drinking the prasadam.

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Beach

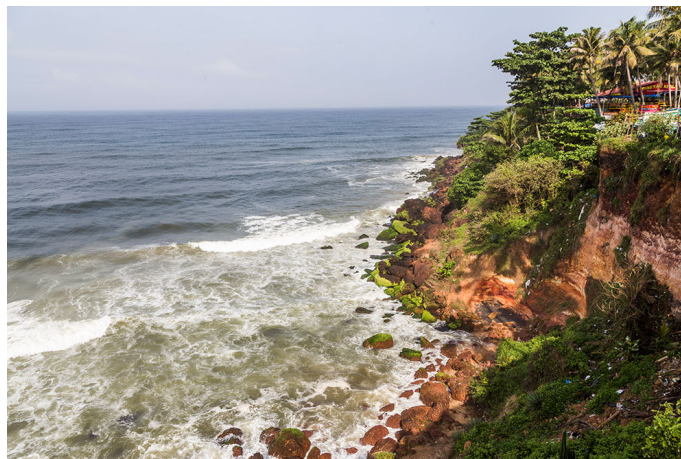
The most popular beach at Varkala is Papanasam beach. It translates literally to 'sin destroyer'. The water is considered to have medicinal properties as it washes the nearby medicinal plants. Devotees carry the ashes of the loved departed ones and place them in the sea at the beach.



Road going from Varkala town to beach.



Papanasam beach.



Hills adjoining the beach.



Coconut trees with two fisherman.

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Fisherman working on net.



Shacks along the beach.



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Temple

Janardanaswamy is 2000 years old temple situated in Varkala town of Kerala. The temple is around 1km from the beach. It is dedicated to lord Janardan, considered as a form of lord Vishnu. It is also known more popularly as Dakshin Kashi (Benares of the south). The temple sports an ancient bell, removed from a shipwreck of a Dutch vessel which sank on the coast without any casualties. The temple has a four-armed deity of Sri Janardana which is dressed in a different Vishnu incarnation every day.

There is a interesting story behind the temple. One day sage Narada, was returning to see Brahma. Lord Vishnu enchanted by Narada's music followed him to Brahmlok. Lord Brahma offered salutations to Lord Vishnu, but Lord Vishnu being caught off guard disappeared. The devas laughed on seeing this and thus cursed by Brahma to born on earth. Narada told them to perform penance at the place his 'Valkalam' fell. The name Varkala is said to be corruption of 'Valkala'.



Temple area with main temple on the right.

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Area in front of main temple with lamps on the walls.



Main temple.



Side gallery with the path to do parikrama.



Side wall of the main temple.

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Front of the main temple.



Shiva temple.



Top of Shiva temple.



Top of Shiva temple 2.

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Top of Shiva temple 3.



Lamps installed on the walls around the temple.



Nandi, bull considered as one of the main devotees of Lord Shiva outside Shiva temple.



Wood-work done on the roof.

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Statue outside the entrance showing the stone-work and aesthetics.



A stone statue at Shiva temple.

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The second entrance.



Wood-work on the roof.



Kerala style wooden gate.



Roof made of only wood.

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Intricate woodwork on a gable.



Side wall of the temple with lamp posts and a stone monkey.



Ganesha temple.



Metal work on a image of Lord Vishnu.

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The amazing mix of stone and wood to build the gate.



Stone statue at the second entrance.



Woodwork on the roof.



Intricate metalwork done on one of the metal pillars.

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Stone statue at the entrance of main temple.

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Temple complex area.

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Contact Details

This documentation was done by Abhey Singh at
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