

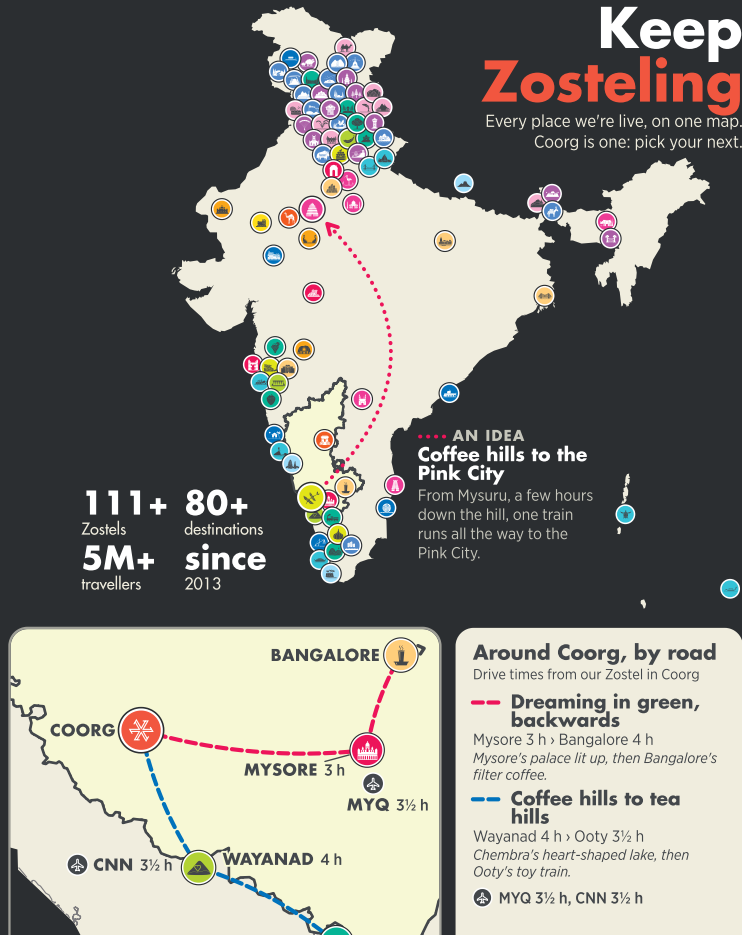
COORG

a map made by Zostel
for young travellers
FREE MAP • KARNATAKA



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ZOSTEL



India and its states: DataMeet (CC BY 4.0), the Survey of India outline. Roads, airports, station: © OpenStreetMap contributors; drive times by FOSSGIS OSRM, scaled to Zostel's own published times (2026-10). Pins nudged apart where they crowd; edge pins point the way. Flights and trains change; check before you plan.



Namaskara, Coorg!

Namaskara! We're the Coorg Zobus, and this is Kodagu: misty hills over the Western Ghats where coffee grows under tall shade trees wound with pepper, and the Kaveri starts its run to the sea. Madikeri is our old capital on its ridge: a fort the Haleri rajas built of mud and Tipu rebuilt in stone, domed tombs on the hill, a temple over its tank, and Raja's Seat for the sunset. Our Zostel is out in the estates on the Chettalli road. Walk the town, ride to the falls, eat kadambuttu, and slow down. Mist is free.



Every number is a tip on the map overleaf, in the colour of its kind: **Fort**, Domes, Views, Falls, Hills, Estates, Kadambuttu and Coffee, Honey, Spice, Beans, Kodava Stories, For a True Backpacker. A drawing beside a line shows what you will find there:

Stay with us in Coorg

One Zostel, in the coffee estates on the Chettalli road, about 5 km east of Madikeri: a bus to the Kadagadai stop, then 2 km on foot, or a cab from town.

Zostel Coorg (Madikeri)
Out among coffee, pepper and jackfruit on the Chettalli road, about 5 km from Madikeri: dorms, rooms and villa stays, a verandah, hammocks, and sunrises from the machan.

Maps: © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL), data fetched 2026-10-13 (UTC) - Terrain: Terrain Tiles on AWS (Mapzen/Tilezen), from SRTM courtesy of NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey. Walk lines routed by FOSSGIS OSRM on OpenStreetMap. Drawings: the Zostel brand's own. Things change; check the day's timings at the gate.

Practical tips

Getting in
Madikeri has no railway and no airport: everything comes by road. KSRTC and private buses run in from Mysuru, Bengaluru and Mangaluru to the town's two bus stands. The nearest airports are Kannur, under 100 km, and Mangaluru; the railheads are Mysuru and Mangaluru. From Mysuru it's about four hours by road.



Getting around

Madikeri is small and steep: walk it. For the falls and the viewpoints take an auto or a cab and agree the fare and the waiting time first. Local buses are few. Mandalapatti's last stretch is for jeeps. Hire a scooter only if you know wet hill roads.

When to come

November to February is dry and cool, best for walking. March to May the coffee flowers white and smells of jasmine. The monsoon, June to September, is heavy (Madikeri gets close to four metres of rain a year): the falls roar, the leeches come out, and the mist never leaves.

Estates are someone's home

Almost every green slope is a private estate. Walk the roads and the public paths, and join a plantation walk to go in among the bushes. Never pick the cherries or the pepper, and close the gates behind you.

Rain gear and leeches

Carry a rain jacket in any month and shoes with grip. In the wet months leech socks, or salt in your pocket, save a walk. Hill roads close after a landslide: check before you set out.



Quiet hours

Our Zostel is in a village among the estates: quiet hours at night, no loud music, and the house rules hold in and round the property. Sunrise from the machan is the house's party.

Money and network

UPI works in town and at the Zostel; keep some cash for buses, small shops and the falls' gate. The signal fades in the valleys.



From the fort to the tombs on the hill

4 km • about 3.5 hours with stops • 9 stops

Nine stops: the fort's elephants, Ganesha and museum; Omkareshwara's tank; the Kodava Samaja's shops; coffee by the KSRTC stand; the lower town's mosques; a bakery; then up to the Gaddige's domed tombs.



The stops

- Madikeri Fort and palace**
Look for the two life-size mortar elephants at the palace's north-east corner, and the three gates of the east entrance.
- Kote Mahaganapathy temple**
Look for the fort's own Ganesha: kote means fort.
- Omkareshwara temple**
Look for the fish in the tank and the little pavilion in the middle of the water.
- Kodava Samaja Shopping Complex**
Look for spices, steel and everyday Kodagu in one building.
- Ainmane Cafe**
Look for a Coorg coffee, strong, with milk.
- Makkah and Madina masjids**
Look for two mosques a minute apart, by the bus stand: ask before you step in.
- Jamiya Masjid**
Look for the lower town's mosque on the road north.
- Indian Bake House**
Look for a puff for the climb.
- Gaddige, the Rajas' tombs**
Look for onion domes with turrets at their corners, and the royal priest Rudappa's tomb of 1834 among them.

5 minutes of history

- 1600 The Haleri rajas**
A line of rajas from Haleri, near Madikeri, takes Kodagu and rules it for more than two centuries, to 1834.
- 1681 Mudduraja's town**
Mudduraja levels the ridge, builds a fort of mud and a palace inside it, and moves his capital here: Muddurajakeri, Mudduraja's town, Madikeri.
- Late 1700s Tipu's stone**
Tipu Sultan takes the fort, rebuilds it in granite and renames it Jaffarabad. In 1790 Dodda Virarajendra wins it for the British.
- 1812 The palace renewed**
Lingarajendra II renovates the palace in the fort, between 1812 and 1814. The two mortar elephants still guard its north-east corner.
- 1820 Omkareshwara**
Lingarajendra II builds the Omkareshwara temple in the town, a dome and four corner turrets over a tank.

- 1834 Mercara**
The British annex Kodagu and take the fort. Madikeri becomes Mercara, and European planters move into the hills to grow coffee.
- 1859 A church in the fort**
The East India Company's soldiers build St Mark's in the fort. Closed after Independence, it is now the fort's museum.
- 1899 A field marshal is born**
K. M. Cariappa is born in Kodagu and schooled in Madikeri. He becomes Independent India's first Indian commander-in-chief, and later a field marshal.
- 1906 Sunny Side**
K. S. Thimayya is born in Madikeri, in a house called Sunny Side. He rises to lead India's army; his house is a museum since 2021.
- 1950 Coorg State**
Coorg becomes a state of the new Republic, with Mercara its capital, until 1956, when it joins Mysore State (Karnataka today).
- 1997 Families take the field**
The first Kodava Hockey Festival: today more than 200 family teams play in one of the largest field hockey tournaments in the world.

Today A third of India's cup
Kodagu grows more than a third of India's coffee, with pepper, cardamom and the Coorg orange in the same estates.

Talk like a local

- Namaskara**
Hello (Kannada)
nuh-muss-kaa-ra
- Dhanyavada**
Thank you
dhun-yuh-vaa-da
- Hegiddira?**
How are you?
hay-gid-dee-ra
- Chennagide**
It's good
chen-naag-gi-day
- Ruchi**
Tasty
roo-chee
- Kaaphi**
Coffee
kaa-fee
- Neeru**
Water
nee-roo

- Bus nildana ellide?**
Where's the bus stand?
bus nil-daa-na el-li-day
- Saaku**
Enough, I'm done
saa-koo
- Ainmane**
A Kodava family's ancestral house (Kodava takk)
ain-mah-nay
- Puttari**
'New rice': the harvest festival
poot-ta-ree

Eat like a Kodava
Kodagu eats rice every way it can: steamed into balls, rolled into thin roti, pressed into noodles. Then come the curries, sharp with kachampuli, the dark fruit vinegar of the hills, and coffee from the estate next door.

- 4 Coorg Cuisine.**
Kodava food by the post office: the day's plate, at lunch.
- 11 Raintree.** Behind the town hall: a slow dinner, then coffee.

Dishes to hunt down

- Kadambuttu.** Steamed rice balls, eaten with a curry and your hands. Puttari's dish, and every Sunday's.
- Akki otti.** A thin flatbread of rice, soft and spotted from the pan. Good with honey too.
- Noolputtu.** Rice noodle cakes, the breakfast of the hills, with a coconut curry.
- Pandi curry.** The Kodava pork curry, dark with kachampuli: the dish Zostel's own guide names first. Ask for it at the Kodava kitchens.
- Baimbale curry.** Bamboo shoot, soaked for days, then curried with curry leaves, chillies and coconut.
- Kuleputtu.** Street food of ripe jackfruit, rice, jaggery and cardamom.
- Coorg coffee.** From the estate next door: ask for it strong, with milk, the hills' wage.
- Coorg orange.** A tight-skinned mandarin, sweet and sour, in winter's markets.



Got a day to spare?

- 31 Dubare.** The forest camp on the Kaveri: watch the mahouts wash the camp's elephants in the morning, from the viewing area (no touching or feeding); rafting on the calmer water nearby.
- Nisargadham and Bylakuppe.** Near Kushalnagar: a bamboo island in the Kaveri over a hanging bridge, then Bylakuppe's Tibetan settlement and the Namdroling monastery, the Golden Temple. Try a thukpa.
- Harangi.** The dam and backwaters north of Kushalnagar; our Zostel recommends them, and a coracle on the river.
- 34 Talacauvery and Bhagamandala.** The Kaveri's source on Brahmagiri, about 42 km west, and the confluence down below it.
- 38 Mandalpatti.** Grassy tops north of town, the last stretch by jeep; our Zostel recommends the trek.

- Iruppu Falls and Nagarhole.** Far south: falls with a rocky pool at their foot, for a dip inside the safety railing. Never past it: strong currents and sudden drop-offs, the water at its highest in the monsoon. Then the Nagarhole forest, home to elephants and gaur.

- 33 Tadiandamol.** Kodagu's highest peak, a full day's trek through shola and grass.
- Chiklhole and Chettalli.** A quiet reservoir among the estates, and Chettalli's coffee and fruit research stations, on our Zostel's side of town.

Festivals worth timing a trip for

- 1 Madikeri Dasara.** Ten days of Navaratri: four karagas from the Mariamma temples, then the all-night procession of ten mantapas on Vijayadashami.
- 34 Kaveri Sankramana.** Mid-October, when the spring at Talacauvery wells up at the moment the sun enters Libra: thousands gather at the source.
- Puttari.** 'New rice': the harvest, late November or early December on a full-moon night. Ainmanes are decked with marigolds and mango leaves.
- The Mariamma karagas.** Dasara opens with four karagas, from the Dandina, Kanchi Kamakshamma, Kundurumotte Chowti and Kote Mariamma temples, carried from Pampina Kere behind the volaga band.
- Kodava Hockey Festival.** Every year more than 200 Kodava families field a team each: one of the largest field hockey tournaments anywhere.



Coffee, from shade to cup

- Under the shade.** Coffee grows here under tall shade trees, and pepper vines climb their trunks: one estate, three crops.
- The blossom.** March to May, after the first showers, the bushes flower white for a few days.
- The harvest.** Winter: ripe red cherries are picked by hand into baskets, then dried in the yard.
- Arabica and robusta.** Both grow here: arabica on the higher slopes, robusta lower down.
- Plantation walks.** Our Zostel stands in an estate of coffee, pepper and jackfruit: ask for the village walk.

The Kodavas, Coorg's own

- The ainmane.** Each akka, a family clan, has its ancestral house among its fields and woods, where the family gathers.
- Kodava takk.** Its own language; a script by I. M. Muthanna was made the official one in 2022.



- The sari, worn the Kodava way.** Pleats at the back and the loose end pinned at the right shoulder; men wear the long kuyya at ceremonies.
- Devarakuda.** Every village keeps at least one sacred grove, left wild among the coffee since the rajas' time.

- 34 Kaveri, their own.** The river is the Kodavas' Kuladevi, their patron goddess; at Kaveri Sankramana married women worship her as Kanni.
- Before the rajas.** Kadambas, Gangas, Cholas, Hoysales and Vijayanagar each held Kodagu before the Haleri rajas.
- Cradle of Indian hockey.** More than 50 Kodavas have played hockey for India, seven of them at the Olympics.

Two generals from one small town

- Sunny Side.** General K. S. Thimayya's birthplace, about a kilometre from the bus stand: a war museum since 2021, with the old Kodava rooms and a huge cement shoe in the garden.



What to look for in Madikeri

- 1 Two elephants of mortar.** Life-size, at the palace's north-east corner in the fort.
- 1 Three gates in a row.** The fort's east entrance winds through three gates; the walls have six round bastions.



- 1 A field marshal's portrait.** Cariappa's large portrait in the fort's museum, the old St Mark's church.
- 6 Fish in the temple tank.** Omkareshwara's tank, with a pavilion in the water.
- 30 A priest among the rajas.** The royal priest Rudappa's tomb of 1834 beside the rajas' domes.
- A shoe the size of a car.** The huge cement shoe in Sunny Side's garden, General Thimayya's house.
- The sari, pleats at the back.** Older Kodava women still wear it their own way: pleats behind, the end pinned at the right shoulder.
- Coffee in flower.** March to May, the estates round town go white for a few days after the first showers.

Only in Coorg

- Two generals, one town.** Field Marshal Cariappa and General Thimayya both grew up in Madikeri; both led India's army.
- Scotland of India.** The nickname every guide gives it, for the mist and the green.
- The Coorg orange.** A tight-skinned mandarin grown among the coffee for over 150 years; GI-tagged in 2006.



- Honey country.** Coorg is one of Asia's largest producers of honey; Virajpet's sells across India and abroad.
- Four metres of rain.** Madikeri gets nearly four metres in a year. The leeches love it.
- Clean air.** Madikeri sits near the top of India's cleanest-air towns in the 2024 lists.
- 21 Gandhi on the ridge.** Each 30 January an urn of Gandhi's ashes is carried to Raja's Seat; the garden around it is Gandhi Mantap.
- Cardamom too.** Coorg's green cardamom has its own GI, like its orange.

What to carry home

- Honey.** From the beekeepers' co-operative in town (Coorg Honey and Wax Producers' Co-operative): light to dark, and beeswax.
- 15 Coffee.** Estate coffee, beans or ground, from the shops in town: arabica, robusta or a blend.
- Spices.** Black pepper, green cardamom (Coorg's has its GI) and cinnamon, from the spice shops on the main road.
- Kachampuli.** A bottle of the dark Garcinia vinegar, to cook Kodava at home.
- Coorg oranges.** In winter, from the market: tight skin, sweet and sour.



Coorg these days

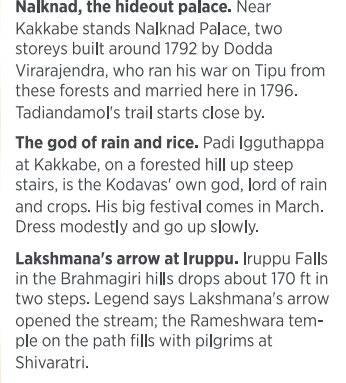
- Workations in the estates.** Wi-Fi, a verandah and the coffee next door: our Zostel's common rooms are for reading, art and work.
- Estate coffee, roasted here.** Town shops sell Coorg's beans and powder by the weight: ask for it fresh.
- Homestays.** Many families open their estate bungalows to travellers: a way into Kodava kitchens.
- Tibetan neighbours.** Bylakuppe, near Kushalnagar, holds the first Tibetan exile settlement in India (1961); thukpa and momos, about 35 km from Madikeri.
- Stars.** Away from town the sky goes dark: spot stars from the estates on a clear winter night.

Good to know

- A district, not a town.** Coorg is a district, not one town. Madikeri is its capital; Kushalnagar, Virajpet, Somwarpet and Ponnampet are the other towns. The sights are spread wide, so pick your base by what you want to see.



- Kushalnagar for the east.** Kushalnagar, on the Mysuru road, is the base for Coorg's east side. Nisargadham is about 3 km out, Dubare sits on its Siddapura road, and autos wait by its bus stand for Bylakuppe's monasteries.
- Elephants on the estate roads.** Wild elephants move through Kodagu's coffee estates, Chettalli's coffee research station included, and wander onto the roads, by day and by night. One more reason to be back from the estate roads before dark.
- Why Omkareshwara was built.** The story goes that Lingarajendra II built Omkareshwara to atone for killing an innocent Brahmin: nightmares followed him until wise men told him to build a Shiva temple. Its linga was brought from Kashi.
- Nalnad, the hideout palace.** Near Kakkabe stands Nalnad Palace, two storeys built around 1792 by Dodda Virarajendra, who ran his war on Tipu from these forests and married here in 1796. Tadiandamol's trail starts close by.
- The god of rain and rice.** Padi Iguthappa at Kakkabe, on a forested hill up steep stairs, is the Kodavas' own god, lord of rain and crops. His big festival comes in March. Dress modestly and go up slowly.
- Lakshmana's arrow at Iruppu.** Iruppu Falls in the Brahmagiri hills drops about 170 ft in two steps. Legend says Lakshmana's arrow opened the stream; the Rameshwara temple on the path fills with pilgrims at Shivaratri.



- Rites at Bhagamandala.** At Bhagamandala pilgrims bathe where the Kaveri meets the Kannike and the unseen Suiyoti, and pray for their ancestors before going up to Talacauvery. Look at the temple's steep West Coast roofs.
- Bylakuppe's Golden Temple.** In Bylakuppe's Golden Temple three gold-plated statues sit above the altar: the Buddha, about 60 ft tall, with Padmasambhava and Amityasu beside him. Shoes off, voices low, and turn the prayer wheels clockwise.
- Coorg Arabica, by name.** Since 2019 Coorg Arabica has its own GI tag, one of five Indian coffees given one that year, for coffee grown in Kodagu. In the shops, ask for it by name.
- Whitewater on the Barapole.** Coorg's whitewater is on the Barapole in south Kodagu, near the Kerala border: Class III to IV rapids, run in the monsoon months. Low water stops it, so ask locally before you drive down.
- Mallalli's long stairway.** Mallalli Falls is the Kumaradhara dropping at the foot of the Pushpagiri hills, about 26 km past Somwarpet. Hundreds of steps lead down to it: slippery in the rain, so wear shoes that grip.
- Chelavara: look, don't swim.** Chelavara Falls, by Cheyyandane on the Virajpet to Talacauvery road, pours into a very deep pool with an unpredictable bottom. People have drowned here and the danger signs mean it: watch, never swim.



- Kotebetta, the gentle peak.** Kotebetta, about 1,620 m and one of Kodagu's highest peaks, is a gentle trek from the Madikeri side, about 14 km there and back. Go in autumn or spring; the monsoon makes it slippery.
- A Kodava bride's gold.** Look for a Kodava bride's gold: the kokkeethathi, a crescent pendant with Lakshmi, two birds and a cobra, and the jomale, rows of hollow gold beads on black cord. Both are still sold here.
- St Anne's in Virajpet.** St Anne's Church in Virajpet goes back to 1792, the year Dodda Virarajendra founded the town. Rebuilt in 1868 in Gothic style, its tower still rings two old bells. Step in quietly.

Along the ridge to Raja's Seat

- 1.6 km • about 2.5 hours**
Eight stops: lunch and a coffee on the way down; St Michael's; Gandhi Maidan; Raja's Seat for the sunset; the musical fountain after dark; Nehru Mantapa if the Seat is packed. Take a layer.

- 1 8 12 9 10 21 22 23**

