



trivandrum to kasargod
- the kerala conquest

September 4 to 13 and 27, 28
(pythal malai, madikeri—1558 kms)

KERALA CONQUEST—THE HUMBLE WAY

Trip Objectives

- Conquer Kerala pedaling!
- Explore Coorg
- Overnight jungle stay
- Document exact distances, time and speed with a cycle-computer
- Break previous records and attain at-least 250 Km in a day

Milestones

- **1558 km!** in 12 days
- Reached **Madikeri** alright, but not before two enchanting experiences—**Pythal Malai** and **Irrity**
- Developed a very accurate road -distances map
- Maximum distance cycled in a day—**291 km** from Trivandrum to Trichur (will I be able to do this again I wonder)
- Maximum speed attained—**49.77 km/hr** (now this I will never attempt again!)

If craziness is given a set a pedals then what would result is a trip like this (and a travelogue there after!)

Maybe you have doubts about the lengths and breadths of the trip and just maybe you feel that my bike and myself were 'dropped' conveniently at these locales then let me assure you that miles and miles away from home I too had such thoughts—to put everything in a truck and sleep all way back home. Only thing is there were no trucks around, in fact there were no houses, no electricity, no toilets and no human beings around for miles and miles. And I had not even reached my destination!

Day 1

At the end of an exhilarating 291 km! amazingly I was not much tired



Day 2 to 4

In between heavy downpours and scorching sun the background was ever changing from beaches to backwaters and to lush green paddy fields.



Kapad beach—
kozhikode



Mahe—
Pondichery



Day 5 & 6 Pythal malai – All to Myself

Imagine a day all by yourself, in the midst of a tropical forest, no electricity, no water, no toilets, and of course no network coverage. Adventurous you would agree. Now add to it pitch darkness, incessant rains and howling winds! I don't know if you are getting the picture but that was one of the most scariest(read exciting!) nights of my life. And yes I had to stay awake all-night to save blood!

It all started just like any other day of the trip, with easy cycling replaced by strenuous ones as I was gaining altitude. The target for the day was to reach Pythal malai, at 47 km from the base point of Taliparamba. From my previous mountain biking experiences I put an estimate of 7 hours uphill and 2 hours for the return. Progress was fine till I reached Kudiyan malai, the last town en route, around noon for lunch. As usual I paid no heed to warnings and advices but things got difficult with very steep ascends. Come 3 pm and I had made not much progress and had no clue how long I had to go. Dark clouds and poor visibility through misty roads only added to my anxiety. So much for my planning and charting the moment the clouds gave way I realized with a shock that I won't be returning to base that night. It was like this. The maps gave an idea of the distances but the steep ascends were a secret that I discovered a little too late. The roads were too slippery and steep (and exceptionally in good conditions) that it took less than a minute to gain a speed of 50 km/hr. Trust me when I say it was equivalent to doing 200 km/hr on a motor-bike *without brakes!* Now that was NOT exciting and I decided that flying down a gorge wouldn't look good in a travelogue!

Forget about hotels, I had not seen another soul for over three hours. But for the rains I would have happily set up a camp outdoors. I had all the space I could take! That's when I stumbled upon a watchman locking up his shed. He indeed was in a hurry to leave. He confessed very candidly that he was the last person left up there and was too afraid to stay over night. It took lots of persuasion and my driving license and of course some money for him to let me stay behind. His parting gift was a packet of salt which came very handy later on.

Initially I was very thrilled with the realization that I was all alone atop the hill. However, as darkness and mist started shrouding the forest hut I was becoming jittery. I always carry a paper back fiction and I almost completed it cover to cover. Like I said I had to stay awake to save blood. Nothing scary, I am referring to the leeches. Once it starts sucking it would take only few minutes to grow from the size of a hair to that of a finger! All I had to do was sprinkle some salt and it would disintegrate leaving me all bloodied. Around 2 am I did a quick calculation of how much blood I would be loosing and decided to sleep off.

Come morning and all the hardships were aptly rewarded with splendid sights, all beyond words. Mist-kissed trees, clean air and exotic sounds! What more can ask for?



Thank heavy rains for this



Forest shack



Roads were exceptionally good but dangerously steep



Impenetrable forests



Atop Pythal malai



Day 7 & 8 And at 775 km From Home – Coorg!

All the way from home I was wondering why Coorg? Why not Madikeri or Virajpet? I got the answer the moment I read “Welcome to Coorg!”

Two days in wilderness had sharpened my senses and awakened my instincts. And I was infused with so much enthusiasm that nothing could stop me. Not even totally dilapidated roads, lashing rains or an hour of cycling in the wrong direction! The day started from a place named Irritty, which means darkness in Malayalam. Its an easy guess that the name was derived from the darkness from tall trees. Never seen so many of them together in my life. Well, I was proceeding with one question that was lingering for since I had started - why was Coorg , which was not a city or a town but a whole district, so talked about why not any place like Madikeri or Virajpet? The answer was waiting for me the moment I saw a small signpost reading “Welcomg to Coorg!”. The whole of the district collectively appeals the visitor like one big garden.

And surprisingly it was not much of an ascend. So I was breezing by singing to myself. However, I was in for a surprise around 7 pm when I realized that the last few kilometers to Madikeri, the district capital and my destination for the day, involved some serious pedaling. Anyway it helped me combat the chill and reached Madikeri in absolute darkness not knowing what sights were in store for me the next day.

Come next morning I was surprised to see that I had indeed done some serious climbing in the dark!

Left early morning towards abhi falls and did some serious clicking. Raja’s seat lived up to its name. The view was so spectacular that I took as many snaps there as I had taken on my way .



Near Irritty with darkness of tall trees



Madikeri—So far away from home!



Did not have heart to leave her behind



My fav snap—check it out at Orkut



Manicured lawns at Raja’s seat

Summing it up

Total Distance Covered	1558 Km
Total Time	12 days
Longest Distance Covered on a Single Day	291 km
Total Expenses	4000 Rs only
Highest Speed	49.9 Km/hr
Most Cherished Moments	Atop Pythal Malai, Rajah Seat (Madikeri), Irrity Forest
Most Scariest Moment	Rolling down a descend at 49.9 Km/hr and no brakes

Legend for Map on Next Page

day	destination	km	color
1	thrissur	291	■
2	eddapal	59	■
3	quilandi	126	■
4	taliparamba	105	■
5	pythal malai	47	■
6	irrity	59	■
7	madikeri	88	■
8	panathur	92	■
9	talachery	150	■
10	thrissur	219	■
11	kottayam	162	■
12	trivandrum	160	■

