Western Ghat Cycling

Expedition—3

December 22 to 31

920 km

(vellagavi, kodai, bodimedu, munnar

idukki, thekady, varkala)

Trip Objectives

- Conquer heights! - Highest hill station of India, Highest point of south India, Highest motorable road of south India

- Discover un-heard scenic spots off-route and en-route the popular ones

- Spend majority of the trip hopping from one hill to another!

Milestones

Day 1	**First hill station—Thenmala**
Day 2	**Lots of mileage—134 kms**
Day 3	**Vellagavi —A hamlet formed much before Kodaikannal but still un-spoilt (as there are no roads connecting it to rest of the world!)**
Day 4	**Kodaikannal—The highest altitude hill station of India**
Day 5	**Hopping to next hill station—Munnar**
Day 6	**Most scenic mountain biking of my life—Bodimetu & Poopara**
Day 7	**Highest moment of my cycling life—Anaimudi (2695 m)**
Day 8	**Hopping to next hill station—Thekkady**
Day 9 & 10	**From hill stations to beaches— Paravoor & Varkala**

Day 1

This creek has become a regular flag off point for all my trips

(under the bridge at Palode)

I love Kerala...but equally enjoy getting out of it!

Day 2

Something happens to me when I wear this Tee saying "Its so peaceful at the top"

(near Rajapalayam)

In the sugar cane field

(near Rajapalayam)

Lovely sunset *(near Uslampatti)*

Day 3

Lonely avenues leading to the forest trail. Last sight of roads for two days

(after Periyakulam)

The jungle trail started at kumbakarai falls. Warnings were coming aplenty about the difficult terrains ahead. The greatest difficulty I faced was at places where the trail vanished completely. Instincts guided me to stay close to the roaring river. After around six hours of not seeing any one I decided I might as well enjoy the solitude and the abundant greenery all around. Yes there were mystical rewards en-route—breath-taking water falls, enchanting gigantic trees, serene ponds only to name a few.

Poor judgment about sunlight in the deciduous forest started sending spooky vibes in me and by five in the evening the battle was between fatigue and fear.

Just around six when forest was completely swallowed by darkness I saw signs of the hamlet—Vellagavi. The simplicity and humility of the villagers really moved me. My arrival was a major event and people started flocking around me with oranges and offers to put me up for the night. I finally settled for a small cubicle of a hut. The room was so small that I could neither fit lengthwise nor breadth wise. But that night further reinforced my opinion that the smaller a home the more content and full I would feel.

Not posing for snaps, I really had to carry the bike all the way up!

The cubicle of a hut. The best night of my trip

(at Vellagavi)

Snaps en-route forest trail

Day 4

Last sight of the lovely hamlet. May god preserve it for a long time to come!

The simple but nutritious breakfast filled me with fresh leash of energy which lasted till late in the noon. One look at the lovely hamlet I was leaving behind almost filled me with tears.

As I gained altitude excitement began brimming and there was no room left for fatigue or doubt. Around one in the noon and Kodaikkanal!

Well, let me tell you something about me, journeys and destinations. Its not that I don't love destinations but some of us simply miss the best part of the game, the journey itself. Now consider the example of a hill station, any hill station, what is the point in sleeping all the way up in the back of your car and finally reaching a crowded hill top. Its simple geometry. There can only be two end points to a line but infinite points in between! So next time when you go for trips don't just wait for the destination. Don't rush through the journey. There are lots of hidden treasures en-route!

I took some snaps at the regular spots at Kodaikkanal. The one at the lake is specially dedicated for a friend who had mentioned about cycling around the lake.

Dolphin's nose-Entry point to Kodaikkanal after trekking. (I am not afraid of heights but was a little dizzy after trekking all day)

More trekking until Kodaikkanal

Dear buddy, I not only enjoyed cycling AROUND the lake but also cycling TO the lake!

Day 5

Was sort of pay back day. Captured the sunrise and let the wheels do the rolling. For almost fifty kilometers all I did was to sit back and enjoy the breeze!

Day 6

As I had already done Kodaikkanal I was slightly un excitable in the morning. It needed strong something to please me after five days of freaking. Bodimetu and Poopaara did just that. You have to believe me when I say that it was the best mountain biking of my life! Excellent and ever winding roads with breath taking views at each hair pin and last but not the least not a soul for miles and miles!

As I reiterate there is more to journeys than destinations *(Bodi, Bodimetu, Poopara & Sooryanelli)*

Day 7

Highest point of my cycling life

(6000 ft above MSL & Anamudi –2695 m)

Day 8

Munnar, I shall be back soon

(woods that greet visitors arriving at Munnar from west)

My favorite locations between Munnar and Idukki

(near Vellatooval)

Day 9

I never get fed up of these

(Kalvaari mount and Thek-kady lake)

Day 10

The end of the trip was planned to coincide with end of the day and the year!

So back to planning for more trips! Yes if I am not on an expedition then I would be planning for one.

From hill stations to beaches. *(Paravoor and sunset at Shangumukam)*

Summing it up!

1	Total Distance Covered	920 km
2	Total Mountain Terrain	510 km
3	Total Forest Trails	160 km
4	Total Expenses	Rs. 4500 only!
5	Best Moments	Vellagavi, Bodimetu, Poopara, Anamudi, Kaal-vari
6	Toughest Moments	Trekking in forest at dusk (near Vellagavi) Too much sun near Varkala
7	Best Song Companions	Come on—Verve, Lost highway—Bon Jovi, Every day is a winding road — Sheryl crow, I am lost (show me the way)—Dream Theatre

Western Ghat Cyclic Expedition - 3 - Distances and Time Map

anamudi (526 km) 9:30 am

munnar (512 km) 5:45 pm

poopara (481 km) 2 pm

kodaikkanal (320 km) 2 pm

vellagavi (310 km) 6:45 pm

kumbakarai (300 km) 12:15 pm

vellatooval (572 km) 3:45 - 4:15 pm

bodimeetu (472 km) 11:45 am

bodi (445 km) 8:45 pm

periyakulam (291 km) 11 am

andipatti (267 km) 8:30 - 8:45 am

cheruthony (609 km) 7 pm

idukki dam

kaalvari mount

aanavilasom

thekkady (680 km) 5 pm

uslambathi (247 km) 7 pm

katapanna (635 km) 1:15 - 1:45 pm

vandiperiyar (690 km) 9:45 - 10 am

peraiyur (220 km) 4:45 - 5 pm

kuttikanam (715 km) 11:50 pm

mundakayam

srivilliputtur (180 km) 12:55 - 1:10 pm

erumeli

rajapalayam (169 km)

puliyagudi (125 km) 8:00 - 8:15 am

pattanapuram (803 km) 7:40 pm

kadiyanallur (113 km) 7:30 pm

paripalli (843 km)

thenmala (65 km) 2 - 2:30 pm

shencotai (95 km) 5 pm

paravur (858 km)

varkala (868 km)

under bridge (30 km) 10:20 - 10:30 am

atelier (0 km) 7 am
(920 km) 7 pm

Legend	
atelier to kadiyanallur	Day 1
kadiyanallur to uslambathi	Day 2
uslambathi to vellagavi	Day 3
vellagavi to kodaikkanal	Day 4
kodaikkanal to bodi	Day 5
bodi to munnar	Day 6
munnar to cheruthony	Day 7
cheruthony to thekkady	Day 8
thekkady to pattanapuram	Day 9
pattanapuram to atelier	Day 10