

reader
writer

The Bungalow on the Beach, used as a Collector's house in 1845, is now a hotel with eight rooms.



Thy name is tranquillity



**TRANQUEBAR,
TAMIL NADU**

CHAITALI PATEL

What's in a name? Not everything. But a coastal town in the Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu with a name like 'Tranquebar' certainly had a magical ring to it and enough allure for us to plan a visit.

Not surprisingly, our decision to go to Tranquebar was met with raised eyebrows and glares. A five-hour drive to a relatively unknown destination is not what most would call a good choice for a short weekend trip. But luckily for us Tranquebar turned out to be a quaint town and the perfect place to just sit back, relax and gaze at the azure waters of the Bay of Bengal. In fact, the ocean looked so serene that it was hard to imagine it was the same ocean that had kept us company on our drive from Chennai.

Changing hands

A former Danish trading centre, Tranquebar, or Tharangambadi (meaning 'place of singing waves'), was founded by the Danish in 1620 after getting into an agreement with King Raghunatha Nayak to pay Rs 3,111 per month as rent. Eventually bought by the Danish, it was later sold to the British in 1845.

As we drove through the once majestic Gateway of Tranquebar, now a dilapidated structure crying out loud for some restoration, we were transported back to an era

gone by. The road leading up to the beach is lined on both sides by buildings from the Danish and British rule. The Zion Church and the New Jerusalem Church, built in 1701 and 1718 respectively, are still active places of worship.

We caught a glimpse of the Dansborg Fort flanked by the grand Bay of Bengal. A dull yellow structure and not exactly like the mighty forts seen elsewhere in India, the fort now houses a museum.

If Dansborg Fort is historically the most important structure in Tranquebar, then the most beautiful is undoubtedly the Bungalow on the Beach, now a hotel with eight rooms. A majestic white building with a sloping red terracotta roof, the bungalow was used as a Collector's house in 1845 under the British rule. Situated right on the beach, it offers a breathtaking view of the ocean, dotted with numerous fishing trawlers, with the Dansborg Fort to the right and Masilamani temple on the left. The oldest structure in Tranquebar, the Masilamani temple originally had 3 *mandapams* of which only one survives. The one standing *gopuram* is in ruins and protected from the sea by some big boulders to keep the water from hitting the structure.

Soon we returned to the bungalow to spend time out on the pillared verandah along the first floor, listening to the waves crash and watching the birds circle the clear blue sky.

Drive yourself crazy



The views of the scenic Manali-Leh road make the journey to Ladakh as exciting as the destination itself

Q&A inbox

Q Hi. I am planning a road trip to Leh during the first week of June from Delhi via Manali.

I have the following queries:

1. How much time does it take to travel from Manali to Leh? Do we need to stop over for the night? Please suggest appropriate places to stop at and the accommodation available there.
2. In Leh, where can I stay within 1-2 km of Thew Market or Chengspa?
3. Is there any specific medication that we must carry, going by what previous travellers have advised?

Alok

A Hello Alok. First of all, the whole point of driving down to Leh by road is to enjoy the panoramic sweeping valley views and mountainscapes of the journey. If you complete the 475 km Manali-Leh Road within a day you won't get a chance to enjoy the scenic beauty. You may as well go by flight.

Second, a road journey if taken slow and steady (2.5-3 days), will help you get acclimatised to the altitude so you can enjoy Leh even better.

The best place to stay in Leh is near the old market on Old Leh Road. This gives you easy access to pretty much everything.

In terms of medication, carry

some glucose and electrical. Drink ample water on the journey as it only helps speed up the process of acclimatisation.

Q Please tell me whether I should club Kausani or Corbett along with a trip to Nainital. I will be travelling from Delhi, so please base your suggestion keeping in mind the distance, places to see and accommodation at the halts.

Vandana

A Corbett and Kausani are almost equidistant from Nainital. Both these places are well connected to Nainital as well. Corbett is famous for its wildlife and not as much for its scenic beauty while Kausani has some breathtaking views of the Himalayas.

During these summer months, Corbett would be quite hot but chances of spotting tigers could be slightly more. Kausani on the other hand would be very pleasant. Now, your choice depends on what you like more: wildlife or scenic beauty.

You can also visit Sattal, Bhimtal, Naukuchiatal and other such places while in Nainital. These lakes can be covered from Nainital on a day-trip.

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GETTING THERE

There are multiple flights through the day from Mumbai to Chennai. From Chennai, the journey to Tranquebar takes five hours by road.

A drop through the snow

PIC OF THE WEEK

The sun sets over the snow-covered town of Fort Collins, just outside Colorado in the United States. Naman Madia shot this photo in winter.



Rohit Chandak took this photo on the backwaters of Puri, Orissa.

@ TALK TO US

- Send us your travel photos, along with detailed captions and your contact details, to awaynbeyond@hindustantimes.com. We will publish the two best photos of the week, and the 'Pic of the week' will win a prize.
- If you fancy your writing, you can email us your articles (600 words) to the same address. Articles should be accompanied by a brief bio and photos of the place.