



KURUMBADI: Wild and Sublime

At few destinations in the world would you wake up to the teasing whistle of a bird. At Kurumbadi, you do. The whistling thrush welcomes the dawn as it brightens the jagged lines of the misty Nilgiris and struggles to penetrate the dense rain forests in the foothills where elephants and bison roam.

Part of the Nilgiri Biosphere, an ecological hot spot, Kurumbadi, 14 km from Coonoor in Tamil Nadu, exudes the pristine

freshness of the Blue Mountains when they were first discovered by the ecstatic Brits. These are the same hills that Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India from 1876 to 1880, described to his wife in a letter: "It far surpasses all that most enthusiastic admirers and devoted lovers have said about it. The afternoon was rainy and the roads muddy but such beautiful rain, such delicious English mud..."

SPICE SPIKED AIR

We however had driven

from Coimbatore airport across mountains awash with crisp Indian air under a vast blue Indian sky. When we pulled into the Kurumba Village Resort, the air was spiked with a hint of spices because the property nestles in a 10-acre spice plantation, girdled by thick forest.

Fifteen cottages, shaded by jacaranda, jackwood and rosewood trees, are studded with tribal motifs, and equipped with modern conveniences. An open-sided thatched-roof



restaurant serves delectable cuisine (including tribal options).

A lazy first day at the resort was followed by a pre-breakfast forest trek when a wan sun struggled to filter through the tall trees that