



Three kilometres northwest of Mercara, the capital of Coorg, sheltered by a hill range on the west lies a picturesque place with rolling hills and winding streams. A place the British aptly named The Mercara Downs.

Here, a golf course of unparalleled beauty, has grown. Over the last century, the course has become one of the most spectacular courses in the South. The time is right to take the next step forward - to create an infrastructure of international standards.





In the early 1890s a group of Englishmen clear felled the area which was destined to become the Mercara Downs Golf Club. This was the decade when golf was becoming increasingly popular. In the UK alone there were over 2000 courses built.

At the turn of the century, more and more Englishmen were frequenting this course for a spot of golf. World War I brought a spate of army officers who made the Downs even more popular. By the time the Second World War was fought, one could see a sprinkling of Indians, both civilians and officers alike, on the course.

As WW II came to an end we saw the exodus of British officers, Independent India came into being and the archives lost its most valuable records. In 1951 Mercara Downs was incorporated as an extension of the North Coorg Club. Only in the late 80s it stood on its own as the Mercara Downs Golf Club.



History of Golf

The growth of golf as an organised competitive sport in the United Kingdom was paralleled abroad in India and the USA. Gate receipts were used as prize money for the first time in 1892 in Cambridge, England. The first international golf tournament was the Amateur Golf Championship of India and the East in 1893.

Golf was confirmed as a global sport when it was made an Olympic sport in 1900. Grooved-faced irons were introduced in 1902. In 1905 William Taylor invented the first dimpled ball. Arthur Knight introduced steel-shafted clubs in 1910 though hickory was widely used for another 25 years.

In 1921, the R&A imposed a limit on the size and weight of the golf ball which began a 30 year split between the European and Commonwealth game and the US game (regulated by the USGA).

When World War II broke out in 1939, competition in England was largely suspended. The War Ministry diverted all rubber and metal resources into the war effort and drafted men of fighting age into the services.

The Ladies PGA was formed in 1951 (European version in 1988) and replaced the Women's Professional Golf Association. The first Women's Open was held in 1946 and won by Patty Berg.

the 1960s brought with it the struggle against bigotry. In 1961, the PGA withdrew its 'whites-only' rule from its constitution.



History of MDGC

- 1890s → Felling and clearing of trees
- 1895 → 9 hole course established
- 1915 → Influx of WW I British Army Officers
- 1945 → A sprinkling of WW II Indian Army Officers
- 1951 → Incorporated as an extension of North Coorg Club
- 1951 → Government notification to acquire land
- 1984 → 18 hole course inaugurated
- 2001 → Clubhouse land bought and built
- 2002 → Road leading from the main road built
- 2003 → Land adjoining clubhouse purchased
- 2003 → 19th hole established

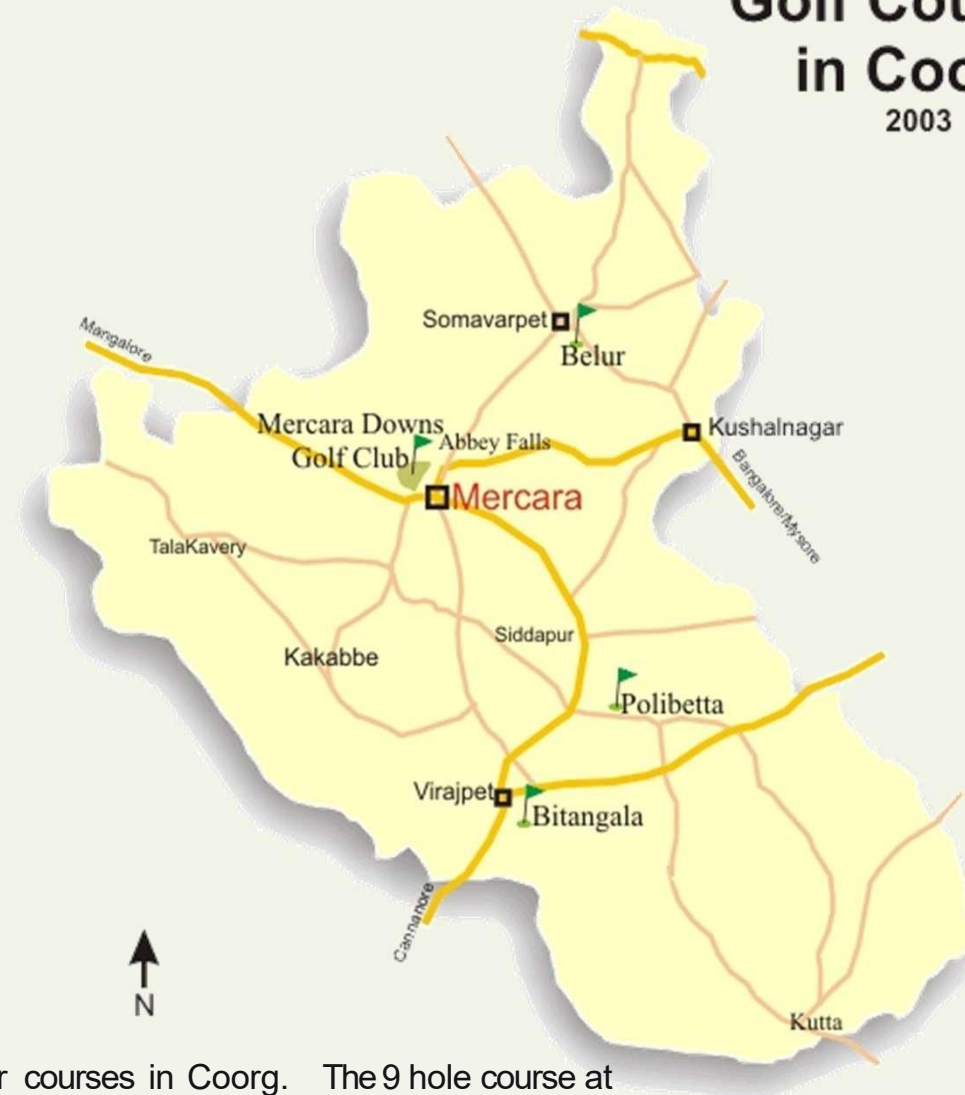




Three kilometres northwest of Mercara, the capital of Coorg, sheltered by a hill range on the west is The Mercara Downs. MDGC is located at an altitude of between 3900' and 4100' above Mean Sea Level and at 75°43'E Longitude and 12°27'N Latitude. To access the course, drive northwest through the town past the senior college. The road rises steeply past a rice mill (on the right). Take the next left at the T junction. At the next Y junction, go left, keep straight past a public tap till you reach the new road leading to the clubhouse.



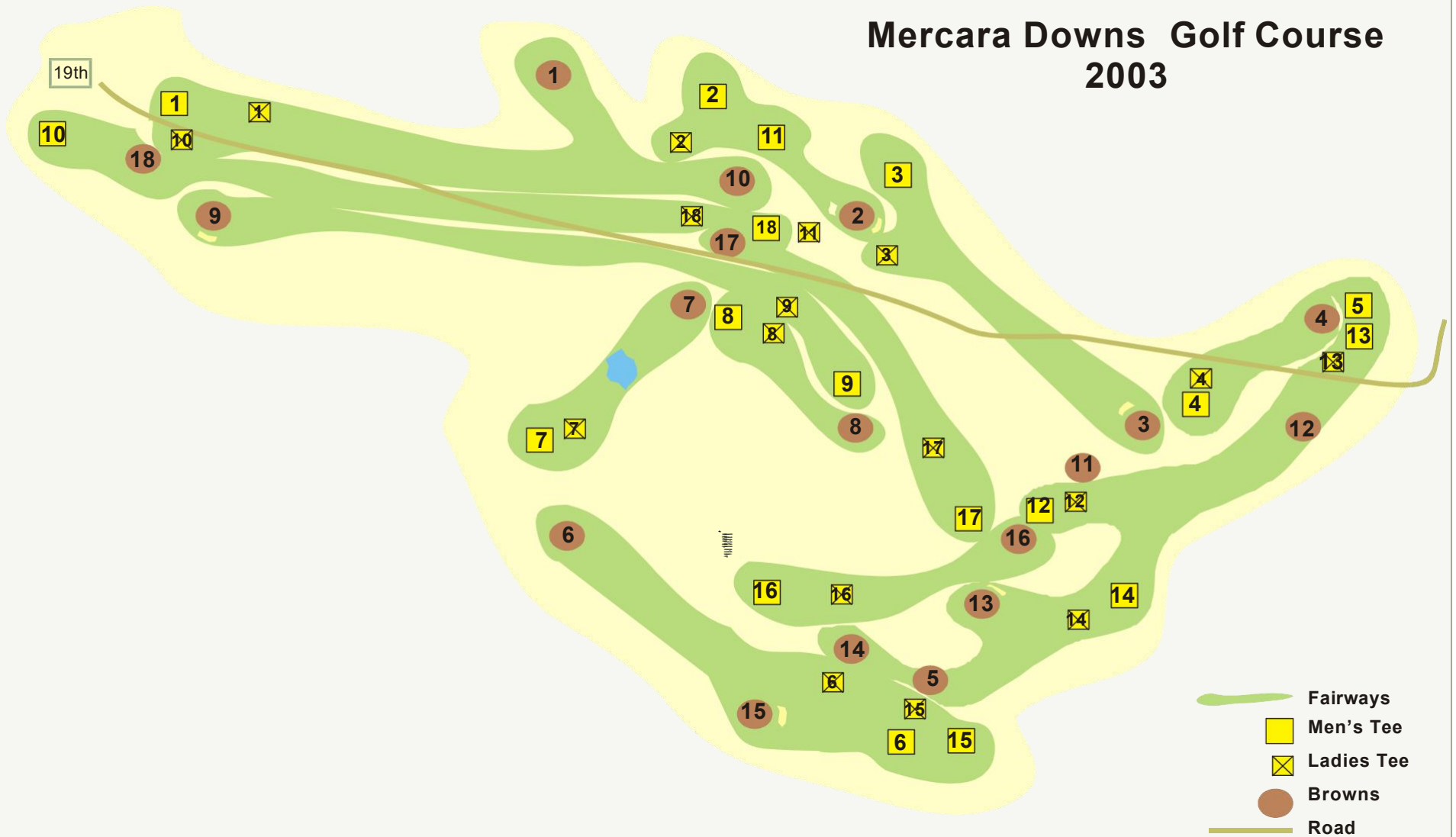
Golf Courses in Coorg 2003



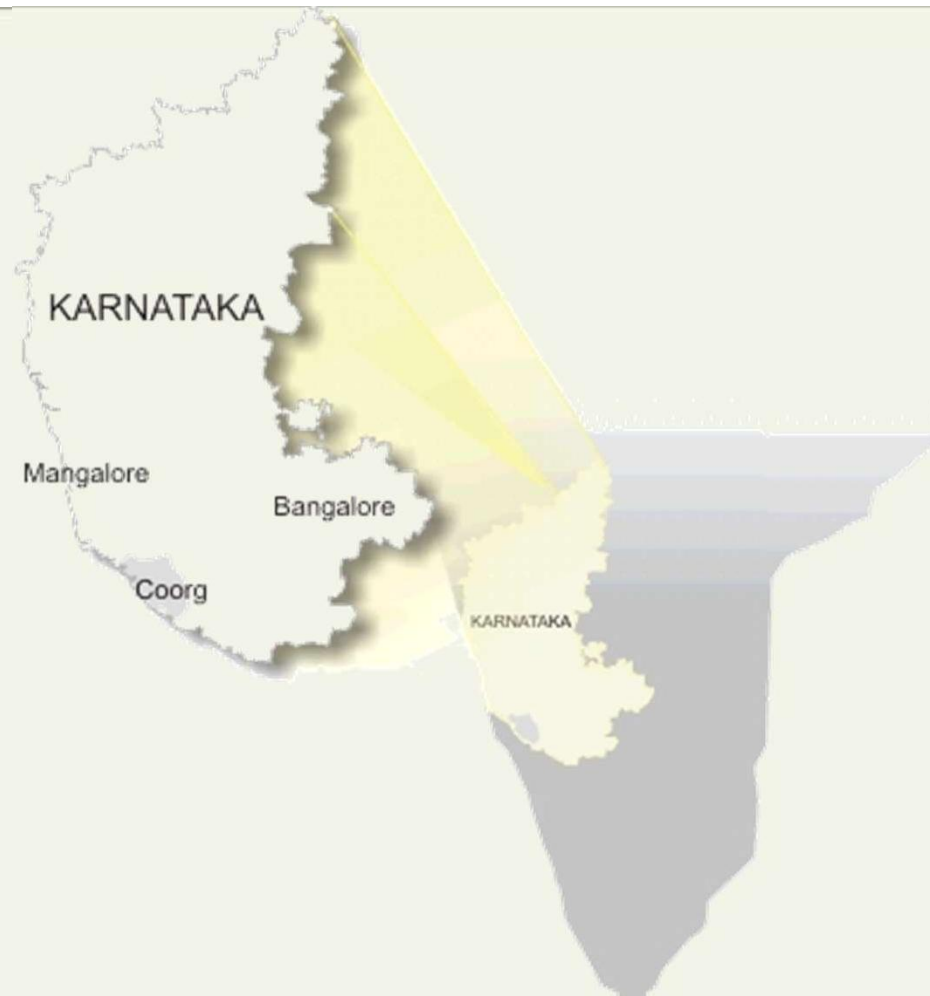
Apart from the MDGC, there are three other courses in Coorg. The 9 hole course at Pollibetta, privately owned and managed by Tata Coffee, is a tight and challenging course. One of the oldest is the Belur Club near Somvarpet, which also has 9 holes. This course is not very well known or frequented. The new course at Bittangala, near Virajpet, is being developed into a 18 hole course.



Mercara Downs Golf Course 2003



The course is spread over hundred acres of the most beautiful country. In the dry season it is not unlike the links courses of Scotland where the game was born. The monsoon changes course and the gleaming new grass brings a smile to the ardent golfer.



Mercara can be accessed from Bangalore, Mangalore or Mysore. Both Bangalore and Mangalore can be reached by air and train. It is a 4 to 5 hour drive from Bangalore, three hours from Mangalore and just 2 hours from Mysore. Mercara provides ample infrastructure for food and accommodation, with hotels such as The Capitol Village and Coorg International.



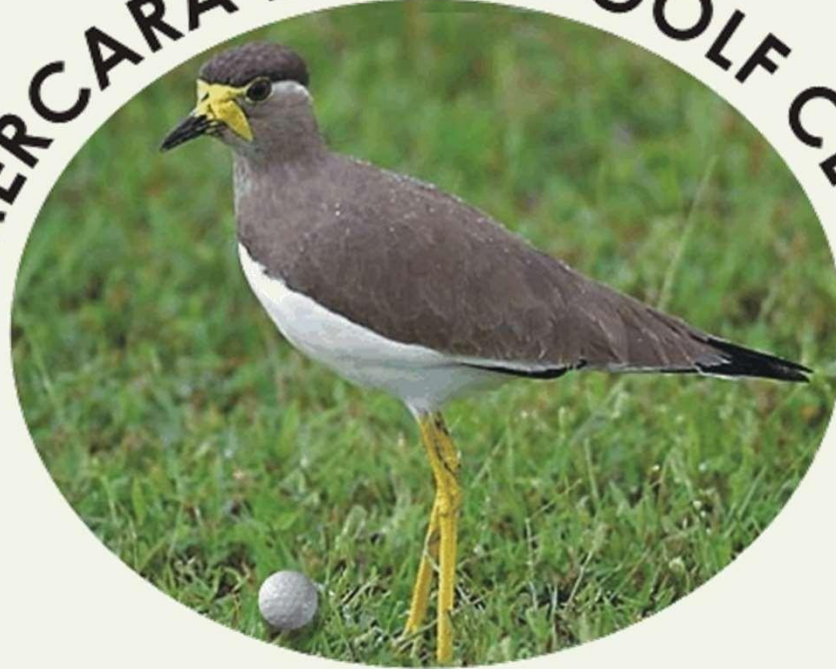
MDGC, on the Tournament Circuit, is now becoming increasingly popular. Over eight tournaments are played every year. The most unique and popular is The Coorg Triangular. The Triangular is played over three courses, culminating at the MDGC. This unique format is unparalleled. Nowhere else is such a tournament played to arrive at a decision. This annual event is awaited by many a golfer in the South, since as the participants will see most of Coorg. The event has the maximum number of prizes. Over the last fifteen years, since 1986-7, the UB Group have been the proud sponsors of this unusual tournament. Since 2001 Golf Addicts from all over the South make their pilgrimage to the chosen venue annually. Fellowship reaches a new high, dwarfing the hills around, at the newly built 19th!!

Tournaments currently played every year

Mercara Downs Open Golf Championship
Murugappa Cup
Coorg Addicts Meet
T.R. Balachandran Doubles Tournament
Satya Coorg Triangular Golf Championship
Sakhamuri Cup
Muckatira Cariappa Memorial Golf Tournament
Mercara Downs Open Golf Championship
Spouse & Spice Tournament
NR Cup
Nirmala Cup
Interclub Tournament



MERCARA DOWNS GOLF CLUB



COORG

The Club's mascot is the Lapwing, nicknamed "did-you-do-it?" due to its peculiarly accusing call. In Kodava, the Lapwing is known as Uptithi.





Easily one of the most attractive regions in India, Coorg or Kodagu is an enchanting expanse of natural splendour that nestles amid the hills and valleys of the picturesque Western Ghats. Fiercely independent until its merger with Karnataka, Coorg enjoys a distinct identity all its own. Although Coorg is one of the smallest districts of Karnataka, it is definitely among the most magnificent. The British often likened Coorg to Scotland for its cool weather and natural beauty. And since golf first originated in Scotland, it is befitting that Coorg today should have one of the oldest and best golf courses in India -- Mercara Downs Golf Course.

Established as an important tourist destination in Karnataka, Coorg has several tourist spots of historic, epic and natural importance. It is also the source of South India's most important river, the Cauvery. Steep hills, valleys and gorges with countless streams that gurgle through them, beckon intrepid trekkers and rock climbers.

Coorg has three taluks - Madikeri, Virajpet and Somwarpet. This small district is home to 260,000 people and is famous for its coffee. The main towns of Coorg are Madikeri (Mercara), Virajapet, Somawarpet, Kushalnagar and Gonikoppal. The languages spoken are Kodava, Kannada, Tulu & Malayalam.

Dubare Forest is known for its elephant-training centre and has been taken over by Jungle Lodges Pvt. Ltd. The resident manager of Jungle Lodges, Dr. Shivaram, has started a unique Elephant Interaction Programme. Here, tourists are invited to bathe and feed these massive but gentle pachyderms, followed by an actual safari through the forest on them. A portion of the funds generated go to the upkeep of mahouts and their elephant charges.



For centuries, the people of Coorg have been known for their bravery, sportsmanship and hospitality. A distinguished martial tradition has given the Indian Army several high-ranking officers, among them Field Marshall Cariappa and General Thimmaiah. Several Kodavas (as the people from Coorg are best known) have actively served in the Indian army and the "Coorg Regiment" is among the most decorated. The first military commander of independent India, Field Marshall Cariappa, a Kodava, was born in Coorg.

Kodavas have always been in the limelight when it comes to sports. Many athletes from Coorg have represented India in various sporting events. One of India's youngest golfing stars hails from Coorg.

The graceful and beautiful women of Kodagu are distinguished by their special variants of wearing the saree. Legend has it that Sage Agasthya married Kaveri, the beautiful daughter of Kavara Muni. Agasthya was unfaithful to Kaveri and a great dispute arose between them during which the Kodavas sided with Kaveri. In her anguish, Kaveri decided to flee Coorg in the form of water. It was at a place called Balamuri that a great gathering of Kodavas stood in the way and pleaded with Kaveri to stay on and bless Coorg. Kaveri was rushing down at such speed that the saree pleats of the Kodava women were forced to the rear. Moved by the loyalty and devotion of the Kodavas, Kaveri promised to stay on in Coorg as a river and forever bless and give bounty to the Kodavas. From that day forward, Kodava women wear the pleats of their sarees at the rear.





The main occupation in Coorg is the cultivation of paddy, coffee, pepper and cardamom. Although Coorg is the source of the river Cauvery, its waters are generally not used for irrigation. Some coffee estates use sprinklers connected to wells and ponds. Coffee plants are also used for decoration and are part of the handicraft industry in and around Kutta, a small township near Nagarhole.

In recent years, coffee, the economy's mainstay, has been affected negatively due to the worldwide recession in prices. Now the Coorgs are looking towards tourism as an alternative source of income. Many proud Coorgs, innately people-shy, are beginning to open their homes to tourists. This is supported by the fact that hundreds of paying guest accommodations have sprung up all over the district.

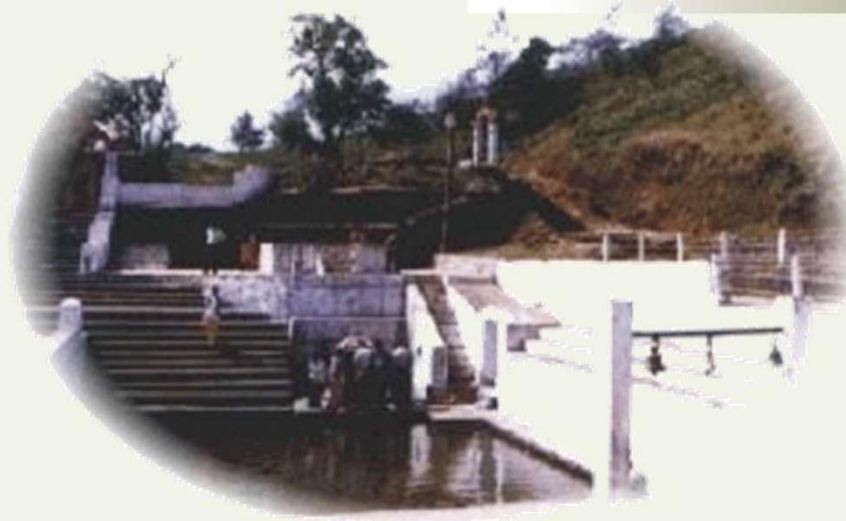




Coorg's climate is generally very pleasant and cool almost throughout the year -- perfect golfing weather! Once greens and proper drainage systems are introduced, golfing is possible for most of the monsoon. Summer is cool, monsoon rains are heavy, and winter can get quite chilly. One spots coffee estates everywhere and major towns appear as small pockets of life between the mountainous forests and coffee estates.

The blossom shower at the end of March is critical to the health and abundance of coffee crops. The wonderful smell of the blossoming coffee flowers pervades the district at this time and the bees get busy creating their special blends of coffee-blossom flavored honey so prized all over India.





Coorg' s festivals, like their famous weddings, are colourful and vibrant Kali Podu in September, Huthri in November/ December and Dassera in October, which explodes into its climax in Mercara.

At the very source of the Cauvery (known to Kodavas as the Talacauvery), every single year at the appointed time, the Cauvery bubbles over from a small square opening in the earth. Thousands of devotees witness this annual "miracle", which reinforces their faith in the life-giving properties of their holy river. This auspicious day which falls in October is eagerly awaited by thousands for it is the moment when the river that nurtures and nourishes begins its long and serpentine journey through the southern states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. On this day, it is said that Goddess Ganga comes to bathe in the Kaveri in order to wash away the sins she has taken on in the north.



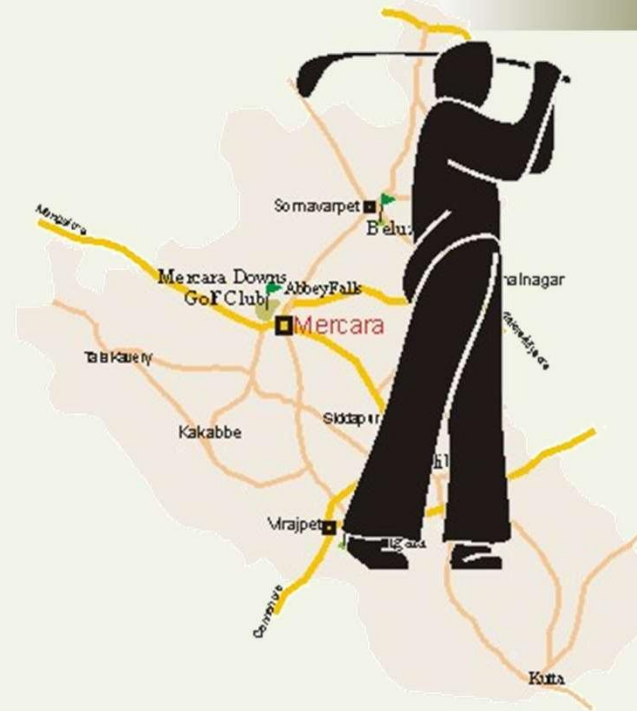
Development of Rural and Backward Areas



Keeping in line with the Indian Government's vision of developing rural and backward areas, the Tourism Industry has to shift its focus to improve the infrastructure in areas that have natural scenic beauty and places of tourist interest. Coorg with its unmatched scenic beauty is ripe and ready for the development of eco-low-impact tourism.

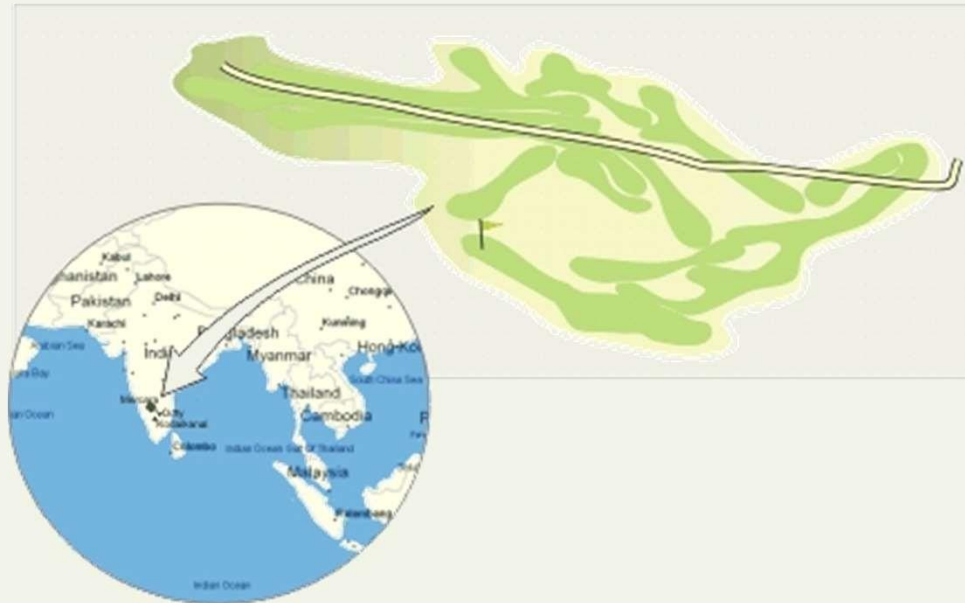


A New Image for Coorg



With the development of golf as a tourist industry, the rural face of Coorg will rapidly change. By showcasing the scenic beauty as well as the sportsmanlike qualities of its people, the new Coorg will attract a class of upmarket tourists never seen before. As a spin off, it will also provide a platform to market its high-quality produce such as coffee and pepper. Corporate golfing memberships will ensure the presence of executives from blue chip companies and will go a long way to enhance the image of the district.





The British had laid out golf courses in many of the hill stations they developed. In the South there are courses in Kodaikanal, Ooty, Wellington, Kundale (not counting the ones in Bangalore and Mysore (no longer considered hill stations)). When this project is completed it will be the first hillstation course to be developed into one of international standards





Apart from green fees which contribute to the maintenance of the course, there are various other opportunities to generate alternate sources of income. The licensing of resorts, star hotels and spas will not only bring a surge of initial capital to MDGC, but could also supplement recurring monthly and annual expenses.

The course, with its sportsman-like ambience, would be ideal for a golf academy. If well organized, it could evolve into the seat of a professional training institution such as the Leadbeater Academy in the US. A floodlit driving range equipped with a pub/ restaurant could well become another source of income for the Club. Prestigious tournaments sponsored by corporates could be yet another source of income-generation. Caddies could be trained and recruited from the local population.

Fulfilling a Long Cherished Dream



MDGC is the home course of Field Marshal Cariappa, a keen golfer and a long-time member. He was renowned for playing on MDGC with a single golf club! It was his long-cherished dream that this particular course should be developed into one of international standards that attract golfers worldwide.



Urban Vs. Rural Golf Courses



Urban golf courses are financially successful because of the number of people using them. However, due to the noise and pollution of urban life, this goes contrary to the very idea of serene and healthy golfing. On the contrary, rural golf courses such as the MDGC have the perfect ambience to promote healthy golfing. They suffer however from lack of funds due to the scarce golfing population.



Thank you

