

# Lion-Tailed Macaque

The Western Ghats of India is a biodiversity hotspot, known for its rich flora and fauna. Among its many natural treasures is a remarkable diversity of primate species. The Western Ghats are home to several endangered and endemic primate species, including the lion-tailed macaque, the Nilgiri langur, and the endangered Hoolock gibbon. The lion-tailed macaque is found only in the Western Ghats and is recognized for its distinctive black mane and long tail. The Nilgiri langur, on the other hand, is a gray, long-tailed monkey found in the Nilgiri Hills of the Western Ghats. The Hoolock gibbon is also found in the Western Ghats and is recognized as one of the rarest and most endangered primate species in the world. The Western Ghats’ primate biodiversity is vital to the region’s ecosystem, and efforts are underway to protect these species and their habitats from various threats, including deforestation and poaching.

In this article, we are talking about Lion-Tailed Macaque

Sl No	Characteristics	Lion-Tailed Macaque
1	Common Name	Lion-Tailed Macaque
2	Scientific Name	Macaca silenus
3	Length	45-60 cm
4	Color	Black fur, silver-white mane and tail tip
5	Height / girth	About 40 cm (for males)
6	Tail length	Up to 25 cm
7	Height till shoulder	About 45-60 cm
8	Average weight	4-10 kg

9	Food habits	Omnivorous, eats fruits, seeds, insects, small animals, and even bird eggs
10	Habitat	Tropical rainforests in the Western Ghats of India
11	Interesting facts	Lion tailed macaque is a species of old world monkey

## Features

The Lion-tailed Macaque (*Macaca silenus*) is a species of Old World monkey that is found only in the Western Ghats of South India. The name “lion-tailed” refers to the lion-like mane of hair that runs along the tops of their heads and down their backs.

The males and females of this species have similar physical characteristics, with adult individuals weighing between 4-10 kg. They have a dark brown or black coat, with a silver-white mane of hair surrounding their face. They also have long tails, measuring up to 25 inches in length, which are used for balance when moving through the trees.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Lion-tailed Macaque is their striking facial features. They have a black face, with a pink or reddish-coloured mouth and pale-coloured eyelids. They also have long, sharp canine teeth that are used for defence and territorial displays.

Lion-tailed Macaques are arboreal, meaning that they live and move through the trees. They are highly social and live in groups of up to 20 individuals, typically with one dominant male. They communicate through a variety of vocalisations and visual displays, including grooming and facial expressions.

One of the most threatened primates in the world, Lion-tailed Macaques are listed as endangered by the International Union

for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Habitat loss and fragmentation due to deforestation, along with hunting and poaching, have significantly reduced their population. Conservation efforts include habitat protection, captive breeding programs, and community education and awareness initiatives.

## **Food Habits**

Lion-tailed Macaques are primarily herbivorous, with a diet that includes fruits, leaves, flowers, and seeds. They have also been observed consuming insects and small animals on occasion. Their food habits vary depending on the season and availability of resources. They are known to be selective feeders, often choosing only certain parts of a plant or fruit to consume.

## **Habitat**

Lion-tailed Macaques are native to the Western Ghats mountain range in South India. Specifically, they are found in the states of Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, in the evergreen and semi-evergreen rainforests of the region. They prefer high-altitude forested areas, typically living in elevations ranging from 400-1,800 metres above sea level.

The Western Ghats are a biodiversity hotspot, known for their high levels of endemism and species richness. Along with the Lion-tailed Macaque, the region is also home to many other unique and endangered species of flora and fauna.

## **Vulnerable Species**

Lion-tailed Macaque is considered to be a vulnerable species in India. According to the latest estimate provided by the IUCN Red List, there are less than 4,000 individuals remaining in the wild, and the population is declining. The species is

listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 in India, which provides it with the highest level of legal protection.

The primary threats facing Lion-tailed Macaques in India are habitat loss and fragmentation due to deforestation, agricultural expansion, and urbanisation. Hunting and poaching for the pet trade and traditional medicine are also significant threats.

Additionally, the species faces competition and conflicts with humans for resources such as food and space, and is vulnerable to diseases transmitted by domestic animals.

## Protected Areas

There are several national parks and wildlife sanctuaries in India where Lion-tailed Macaques can be found. These protected areas are crucial for the conservation of the species and their habitat.

Silent Valley National Park is located in the Nilgiri Hills of Kerala and covers an area of 90 square kilometres. It is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, including the Lion-tailed Macaque.

Anamalai Tiger Reserve is located in the Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu and covers an area of 1,400 square kilometres. It is home to several endangered species, including the Lion-tailed Macaque.

Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Cardamom Hills of Kerala and covers an area of 925 square kilometres. It is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, including the Lion-tailed Macaque.

Kudremukh National Park is located in the Western Ghats of Karnataka and covers an area of 600 square kilometres. It is known for its unique landscape and high levels of

biodiversity, including the Lion-tailed Macaque.

Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Western Ghats of Karnataka and covers an area of 492 square kilometres. It is home to several threatened and endangered species, including the Lion-tailed Macaque.