

Introduction to the Rainforest

At Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary

December 10-16 2006

Or

December 27 – January 2

To be alive is to be part of nature. Yet in a world increasingly dominated by technology and the intellect, a profound alienation from the natural world has taken place. Modern life shuts out the processes that sustain our existence, and this distancing from our bodies, senses, other life forms, and ecological processes disorients and narrows us. Rich or poor, we become estranged from the connectedness of things and our own humanness.

For the past 13 years we have provided nature awareness programs for children. This year we are able to offer a week-long program for adults. The core of the program remains the same: to experience the rainforest through observation, awareness, and an introduction to natural history.

Topics

An Open Focus Approach to Understanding the Forest

Introduction to Local Wildlife: Birds, Reptiles, Insects, Fish

Introduction to Plants: Evolution, Taxonomy, Western Ghats Flora, Organic Forest Farming

Tribal Cultures of Wayanad

Sustainable Living

Physical Fitness

Programme Details (see attached Timetable)

Birdwatching

Experienced birdwatchers are free to go off on their own each morning. Beginners will be taken on an introductory walk in groups of 4.

Physical Fitness

We relate to nature through our senses and our physical body and we believe that it is as important to cultivate our physical capacities as our mental ones. All visitors to the Sanctuary become more physically fit as a result of walking and stair-climbing in daily life. We also encourage everyone to learn to **swim** or improve their stroke during our daily immersions in the river. The **Bodywork** sessions offer exercises help develop flexibility, co-ordination, balance, spontaneous movement:

Bodywork Introduction: posture, symmetry, movement, space
Bodywork Blind and Barefoot
Bodywork Coordination and Reflexes
Bodywork Physical Improvisation

Study Tours

<i>Botanic Garden Tour</i>	Overview of plant evolution and local flora
<i>Wildlife Studies</i>	Learn about local reptiles, fish, and insects
<i>Sustainability Tour</i>	Water, energy, food, waste: how to live lightly on the land
<i>Forest Walk</i>	Senses-based exploration of the rainforest ecosystem
<i>Work Party</i>	Help us with coffee and pepper harvesting, wood chopping, conservation greenhouse activities, etc.

Observations

'Watching' Projects

Early naturalists learned about the world by close observation of the things that interested them: plants, animals, patterns in nature, etc. This old-fashioned approach results not only in meaningful scientific learning but also cultivates the mind's capacity for attention, silence, and a sense of connectedness.

'Blind' Drawing

Blind contour drawing is a method of sketching that emphasizes one's process of observation over the production of an end-product. It is equally effective for complete beginners and experienced artists.

The Practicalities

Accommodation

Our accommodation is clean, attractive, and *very basic*: mats on the floor in shared rooms. Toilets and bathrooms are not attached to sleeping quarters.

Food

Delicious home cooked vegetarian food, from organic ingredients when available.

What to Bring

Essential and Required:

- Sleeping bag or bedsheets
- Towel
- Torch, preferably rechargeable batteries (the nights are very dark)
- Rubber chappals (trekking shoes/trainers not advised)
- Comfortable clothing that can get soiled

Recommended:

- Carry mat or straw mat for sleeping
- Swimsuit
- Binoculars, if you have them
- Notebook/Journal and pencil or pen
- BSNL phone card (we do not have reliable mobile phone reception)

Please do not bring:

- Detergent powder (we can provide soap for washing)

Fees

Cost for food, accommodation, and instruction for the week is Rs. 3000 per person for Indians or \$120 for non-residents.

Arrivals and Departures

Please try to arrive Sunday *between noon and 6 pm*.
Departures anytime on Saturday.