

Feedback after Wayanad Camp

What did you find most interesting in the camp?

Day 1

- Encountered wild elephants
- The walk through the jungle and the interaction session
- Getting into a restricted, core zone of the forest. It was great to distinguish between core and forestry zones, and shows how different and valuable biodiversity is.
- Trekking. Local community meet ups in groups to tribal houses.

What did you find most interesting in the camp?

Day 2

- Bird watching, Elephant corridor, Landlord's point of view on conflict
- The felling of the invasive trees
- Commuting around Tholpetty as villagers would and visiting/interacting with various levels or landlords/homeowners in the region. It was interesting to compare and contrast each individual's opinions and lifestyles, to show that village life is different in many respects to each person.
- Uprooting.

What did you find most interesting in the camp?

Day 3

- Kuruva Island (bamboo rafting)

- The temple visit and local market visit
- Getting deep into the valley to see the more isolated areas, and how strongly they stick to their local cultures. The peace that was discovered is unparalleled, as well as sampling local products, honey, coffee and crafts.
- Understanding on wild animals conservation.

What is the best thing that you liked from the whole camp and about GRA?

- The company of all 24, Dormitory stay, food - literally everything.
- the way the interaction sessions were arranged providing an insight into the lives of the local people which is otherwise not possible to achieve if we visit as tourists
- That it wasn't along tourist routes, and gave a fulfilling insight into management strategies to co-exist with an ecosystem that is under stress from human activity and reduction of wild area. Food was unbelievable also.
- The camp operated and healed me inside out. It made me so much at ease to be alone and alright that I could do many trips solo right after. It all happened due to the warmth I received from the GRA. I felt a new kind of joy that made me ready and cured for the whole life ahead. I got all the strength and compassion. I learnt acceptance, friendship, and thankfulness towards me and others.

How do you think we could have improved the camp?

- Everything was perfectly planned, food and stay was awesome. I know you people tried a lot for selecting locations and getting permissions and stuff. The members could have scrutinized, also in the invitation mail clearly write that not to expect this as a typical tourist camp and all facilities there. In future if you get prior permission, I suggest booking trains through 'bulk ticketing' with a student discount. Procedure in brief, 1. Student discount form should be given by the institute after dean's approval 2. Fill the form with names, go to the ticket counter in person and book. By booking like this mostly all seats will be booked together in the same coach with 50% discount.

- I think everything was the best that could have been provided considering the circumstances
- Making it longer (Ofc financials considered), the longer someone becomes immersed in a different lifestyle, the more they see it is fundamentally no different to others, that we humans are all the same.
- All perfect. On the train, there were no curry dishes but dry main courses.
-

Write a brief report about the information grasped from the camp.

- I came to know about the cause of why the conflict between wildlife and tribes happened, at Tholpetty it was due to the invasive species, which reduced the food of elephants and deer. I also came to an understanding that there is high scope and need of research on the policies rather than technical.
- The experience of the Wayanad camp was truly unique. The main purpose of connecting with people and understanding the human-wildlife conflict from the perspective of the different stakeholders was rightly served. So far I have read about deforestation and the associated threat to wildlife as the cause of human-wildlife conflict. However, how an invasive foreign tree species can rapidly destroy the local biodiversity and lead to human-wildlife conflict was something surprising to know. The local government is working closely with the NGOs to resolve these conflicts. I appreciate the jobs done by NGOs like WTI to relocate and employ local tribal people as they hold a better understanding of tribal lives and their needs. This opens up the scope of better negotiation compared to a direct government intervention. However, the detailed conversation with the tribal people indicated scope for improvement in government policies to ensure a steady income, insurance policy against losses due to conflicts, awareness of the conservations for tribal people in the education and job sector etc. Also, the policies to ensure a common platform of discussion for all the stakeholders like the landlords, tribal people and the associated people employed as a part of the project look somewhat hazy. I will also suggest the collaboration of the government and NGOs with educational institutes like IIT Bombay as the institutes have enough resources to efficiently solve problems.