

Pages from the diary of Tejas – Orange County, Coorg, June 2010

Tejas visits our resorts in Coorg and Kabini and shares with you some of his uplifting experiences. Join him as he immerses himself in the activities at our two resorts, and enjoy them with him, virtually!



Tejas Joseph resides in Auroville near Pondicherry and is part of a consulting group engaged in creating viable models of decentralised lighting (using solar energy) for off-grid Indian villages. Tejas travels a lot in the course of his work and feels a deep connection with the history and ethos of the places he visits. He is a keen observer of the winds of change that are now blowing across the physical, cultural and social landscapes of India and seeks to capture its effects in his articles, ever believing that the journey is as important as the destination, the travel as rewarding as the arrival! Feel free to write to him at pjtejas@gmail.com if your interests or work coincide with his.

Activity Name	Visit to Dubare Elephant Camp
Duration	Half day
Timing	7.30 AM to 1.00 PM
Guided	Yes (Part of common group – Organised by the forest department) (If required escort from resort to location & back can be arranged at nominal cost of Rs.1200/ Prior booking required)
Cost	Entree fee applicable
Transfers	In own car / Transfers can be arranged at an additional cost (Distance to location from resort 15 kms – 30 minutes drive one way)
Prior Booking Required	No

Elephants in the time of Man

The Dubare Elephant camp lies on the shores of the Kaveri River, about 15 km from the Orange County resort in Sidapur. A short ferry ride will take you across the foaming waters of the monsoon-fueled Kaveri to its other side where lies the camp – the abode of wild elephants in captivity*. The origins of the elephant camp at the Dubare reserve go back to the time of the erstwhile Coorg and Mysore Maharajas who were fond of hunting. The camp was used to capture and 'break-in' wild elephants for use in war, temple and palace festivities, hunting and for transporting timber from the forests. The elephant camp flourished during colonial times as well as elephants continued to play a large role in the social, economic and political affairs of the day up until independence.



Today, the camp is a surrogate home to

18 elephants both adults and young who are fed, bathed and taken care of regularly with funds allocated for this by the Karnataka State Forest Department. These animals are captured from the wilds when they are ill or when they get too close to human habitats in search of food, instigating clashes between man and beast, which do not always go in favor of the big animal*. They are kept in stockades until such time as their wild instincts abate.



Their handlers (*mahouts*) are locals and hail from the indigenous 'kaadu kuruba' community who once dwelt in these forests. Their understanding of elephants (indeed of many wild animals) is profound and surpasses that of many wildlife experts in its details. One can see them prepare and serve big balls of *Ragi* (a local grain) to the elephants for breakfast, wash and cool them down

in the waters of the Kaveri and take them on timber hauling rides. The elephants are set free to roam the wilds of the forests for a few hours every day and are fetched by their *mahouts* if they do not show up as expected at the end of the day.

The Dubare Elephant Camp is most likely the last showcase of a benign symbiosis that exists between man and our planet's largest land mammal. It's a must for all animal lovers, particularly those who are enchanted by the *Elephas maximus*.

- According to a recent survey, there is a wild population of 446 elephants in the Dubare forest presently.
- The elephant is an animal under siege today. Shrinking forests, scarcity of water and food and increasing human encroachments into forest land is forcing it to enter new territories in search of sustenance. These are human settlements where agriculture is a prime activity, leading to clashes between man and beast. If enlightened measures (such as the benign corridor concept - read more about this in the safari stories from the Kabini diary) are not put in place, soon it could lead to the eventual decimation of this amazing animal, a truly wondrous output of evolution.

