



DELIGHTFUL DANDELI

Trekking in Dandeli is a treat for the wildlife enthusiast, and rafting in the Kali river a pleasure, writes **Kavitha Reddy**

An itch for one last adventure weekend for the season prompted us to pack off to Dandeli. Holidays are more exciting when there is a certain amount of travel comfort, so the mode of transport is a critical part to any holiday plan.

Given that Dandeli is 482 kms from Bangalore and since our weekend was going to be filled with adventure and a lot of physical exertion, we opted for a train journey through Kolhapur-bound Rani Chennamma Express that stops at Alnawar, which is around 40 kms from our destination.

So we set off to Dandeli from the Bangalore railway station at around 8 pm on a Friday, to reach Alnawar station at around 6.30 the next morning. There we hired a Tempo Trax. En route to Kulgi nature camp, our campsite, we spotted peacocks, deer and quite a variety of birds; it was

indeed a treat to see them all in the wild.

COMFY CAMP

Kulgi nature camp is managed by the Karnataka forest department and offers a comfortable tented accommodation with common toilets, bath and hot water facility. The camp has an in-house kitchen that serves tasty authentic North Karnataka cuisine. As the camp is in the forest area, we could spot langurs all around, Malabar giant squirrels and birds like minivets, dorangos, blue jays, bee eaters, kingfishers and other common ones.

After freshening up, a good heavy breakfast and packed lunch, with rest of the necessary stuff in our backpacks, we set off on a day-long trek, accompanied by a guide provided by the forest department. The route we chose was to end at Ambikanagar via Nagazari



bridge, approximately 15 kms.

We trekked through the amazing forest range, along the banks of a stream, up the hills and the waterfalls; we could not get enough of it. We took a quick lunch break; with all the exertion, lunch had never tasted better. As the minutes passed by, it was getting darker and colder, but our enthusiasm and thirst for adventure pushed us further. We reached the end of the day-long trek, and in less than an hour from there, we were back in the camp; a long shower and a good dinner had us fast asleep in no time.

WILDLIFE SPOTTING

Early morning is the right time to spot wildlife, so we hopped into the jeeps for a safari at around 6 am. One needs to be patient and lucky enough to spot animals in the wild. Though spotting an elephant or a wild cat would have been the ultimate thrill, we were happy to see few deer, a bison and several species of birds. The jeep track took us deeper into the jungle, where the forest cover got thicker and darker. We went ahead, hoping to spot that one wild cat that could make our day.

Afterwards, we got back to the camp to grab some breakfast and got ready to splash in River Kali. We reached Jungle Lodges and from there were driven in jeeps with the rafting guide team to Ganeshgudi, the starting point for our activity. Rafting in Kali is a real pleasure; as the name suggests, the water appears to be

black due to the colouration of the rock underneath. No comparison to rafting in Rishkesh in terms of distance or the grades of the rapids, but nevertheless, Kali has its own charm, thrills and is a lot fun.

The activity started with a talk on safety, wearing of life jackets and other gear. Once on the raft, we were taught how to paddle and when to paddle followed by a dip in Kali. The 9 km route has 7-9 rapids between 1-3 grades. The rapids depend on the release of the water from the dam. Kali being a perennial river has water throughout the year, but the best time to raft is between October and February. The route has forest cover on both sides, which gives it a serene look. Don't miss the horn bills and the kingfishers along the route.

After all the splashing and screaming in the river, we were on our way to explore

Dandeli town and binge on some food - a sumptuous lunch in one of the local restaurants. We had a little time to walk around the town and reach the camp and pack up. As we drove to the railway station to head back to Bangalore, we promised ourselves that we would come back soon. Places to see here if you have time or an extra day are Kavala Caves and Cynthri Rocks, a 300 ft rock face.

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