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Express Expressions # Cruising Thru

THURSDAY 6-7

ON E-DETOX AND NATURE'S DIET

GO RIVER RAFTING WITH SAHYADRIS IN THE BACKDROP, OR SIMPLY WATCH A MESMERISING SUNRISE AS THE BIRDS WELCOME THE MORNING. MORE OPTIONS AT KHOPOLI'S NATURE TRAILS RESORT

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Wet was the last time we all went on a eclectic (no calls, internet, nothing) binge and been on a nature diet—waking up to the chirping of birds, opening the door of the best house to see a beautiful river flow in the middle of the forest, hot cup of ginger tea and lifewasdifficult.thinkagain?

With holidays popping out of the calendars, there is so much to do, especially go on a unconventional holiday where weare either alone or just with the loved ones and no external disturbances.

One pleasant roinyday I started my journey from Hyderabad to Khopoli, to visit Nature Trails Durshet Forest Lodge, a Sterling Holidays subsidiary. This sprawling seven acre property is designed for those who hate the outdoors. Equipped with 16 AC rooms and host of adventure activities in the quintessential sanctuary getaway and a nature-lover's paradise. Upon arrival, guests are greeted in a traditional manner by a tilakn and welcome drinks. Breakfast, lunch and tea were served as a buffet spread. The food was cooked by locals, home style, and it had the authentic touch to it.

The food was honestly ordinary.

There are a host of activities like river rafting, zip lining, flat rock bridge, Tarzan swing, mountain rappelling and rope ice tour here from. The bizarre, private teak and silver oak forests are ideal for quite rejuvenating strolls accompanied only by the chirping of the birds and the picturesque views of the magnificent Sahyadri Range. Fed by River Amba, the Durshet Forest Lodge is a sanctuary for trekkers and birdwatchers. You can also go rafting on the River Kundalika, amid the Unhavidhand battlefield or you go Mountain biking in this place, the options are endless.

While living in your room, you can see the garden and lawns in the place magically come alive with a natural waterfall during the monsoon season making this an ideal place to rejuvenate and relax. Perfect for day picnics, corporate outdoor training programmes and family weekend the resort is an hour and half drive from Mumbai.

There are lots of sightseeing options close to the lodge, again on request they can arrange a car for you to visit these places. There is a Pali and Mahad Ashta Vinayak Ganapati Temples, the majestic and mystical Thanale Rock Cut Caves, the hot water springs, the historic battlefield of Umberkhind where Shivaji won victory over the huge imperial army led by the general Kartalkh Khan are some of the sightseeing spots near the Durshet Lodge.

One of the best experiences at Durshet is the river rafting. With Western Ghats in the background, rafting in Kundalika river feels blissful. Thanks to my luck, I was the only tourist on the boat. These rafting experts from Uttarakhand let me raft leisurely and enjoy every moment. They kicked me out of the boat at one point, so that I could kick the fear out of me! The second time, I myself jumped into the river and body surfed up to four kilometres of it. Moments of rafting in the river not just filled my memory jar but also gave me four new friends.

If you are lucky, you get to walk into the wild during a hike in a few regions and then, watch the flowers bloom. I managed to climb to the slippery rocky terrain, reach the adventure spot, do some Tarzan swing, crossed the Indian Rhino, gotdown the cliff through zip lining, reach the water fall spot, jumped into the rappelling and of course got introduced to new birds and insects.

Best time to visit

February to March and from September to December are the ideal months. During the monsoon, you can witness the natural waterfall that magically appears in the place. The weather is pleasant during these times of the year. The resort has 11 rooms, 4 dormitories, 2 tents, a swimming pool, a conference room, and a common dining hall which is open from 8:00 am to 10:00pm. The common dining hall provides delicious vegetarian meals, while the small swimming pool gives you a chance to take a relaxing dip.

"FED BY RIVER AMBA, THE DURSHET FOREST LODGE IS A SANCTUARY FOR TREKKERS AND BIRDWATCHERS. YOU CAN ALSO GO RAFTING ON THE RIVER KUNDALIKA, SCOUT THE UMBARKHIND BATTLEFIELD

TRAVEL BASICS

AIR: CR has put it in a formal Airport Mumbai, is the nearest airport at 135 km away. Taxis are easily available to the resort.

RAIL: Durshet does not have a railway station, and the nearest station is Mumbai

ROAD: The Mumbai-Pune Expressway connects Mumbai to Durshet. The best way for travelling between Mumbai and Durshet is by car. Public transport buses also connect Durshet with nearby cities.

WHERE TO SIDE: Cottages rooms, dormitories and campers tents are available to stay at this place.