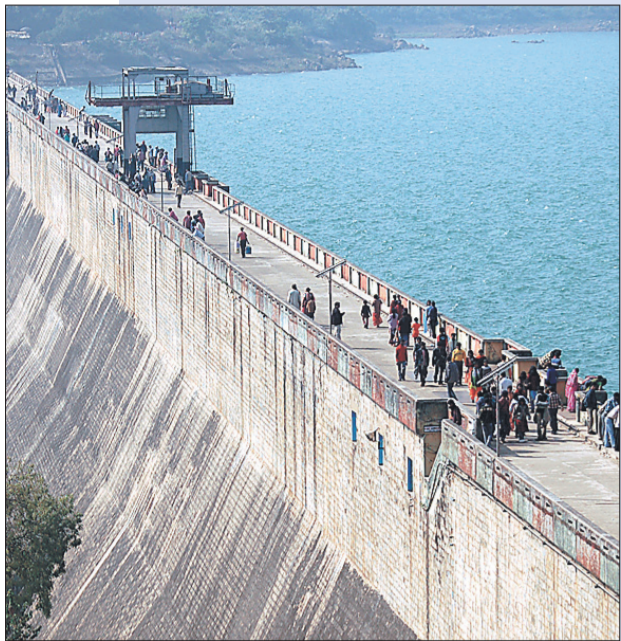


think!

FOOTLOOSE

STORIES FROM THE WORLD AROUND YOU

PICTURE POSTCARD



■ The dam at Massanjore.

Get a breath of fresh air by the river

Place: **MASSANJORE**

Located on the border of West Bengal and Jharkhand, Massanjore, by the Mayurakshi river, welcomes you with a clear sky, rocky terrain and a crystal clear lake. The backdrop of the hills gives the place the look of a picture postcard. If you are looking for an energising weekend in the heart of serenity, this is the right place for a quick trip.

WHAT TO SEE: The Massanjore dam across the Mayurakshi river is an awe-inspiring sight and perhaps the best thing to see at Massanjore. The dam is 155ft high and 2,170ft long. Built with Canadian aid, it is also called Canada Dam or Pearson Dam. The blue waters of the Mayurakshi and the surrounding greenery offer a soothing treat for the eyes. On moonlit nights, the place looks ethereal. Don't forget to stop for a while at the narrow sandbank in the stream for an out-of-the-world experience. On the way to Massanjore, you will travel through Suri. At Tilpara, near Suri, there is a 1,013ft-long barrage. You can also visit Sonatrupara, where an almost 200-year-old temple is dedicated to the Damodar river. Although there is no idol in the temple, the terracotta work on the walls leave tourists mesmerised. These carvings narrate stories about Lord Krishna's life.

HOW TO GET THERE: Jharkhand State Transport Corporation buses ply from Babughat to Massanjore. It takes almost seven hours to reach Massanjore.

WHERE TO STAY AND WHAT TO EAT: Many hotels are available at Massanjore, where you can put up. One of the best options is the Youth Hostel, just 2km from the dam. You can also stay at the state government-run Mayurakshi Bhavan. Most kinds of cuisine are available here.

COST: Double rooms cost ₹100 per night. A dormitory is also available at the Youth Hostel. A double room at Mayurakshi Bhavan costs ₹300 per night.

BEST TIME TO VISIT: You can visit Massanjore at any time of the year. However, it is wise to avoid the heat of the summer months.

Compiled by Tasmayee Laha Roy



■ Adventure sports, such as rock climbing, are popular activities in corporate retreats.

BONDING AT A VACATION

GROUP VENTURE Corporate retreats not only give employees a chance to relax, but also foster team spirit among colleagues

Swati Tewari
letters@hindustantimes.com

A break from the monotonous work routine, with the scope to rejuvenate yourself and build up your self-confidence as you explore your adventurous side, while getting the chance to bond with your colleagues and savour the beauty of nature. This is what corporate retreats are all about.

With competition and demands to perform better growing by the day, companies are leaving no stone unturned to keep up motivation and maintain a stress-free environment for their employees. Be it yoga therapy, psychological counselling sessions or motivational classes, they are trying it all. But the latest to be added in the list are corporate retreats, where companies take their employees on holidays that are meant to refresh, build team spirit and help discover one's self through outdoor education.

Travel companies have come up with experiential learning packages meant for corporate retreats, which provide all sorts of activities that attract participants from various age groups. Adventure sports service providers, such as Sunshine Himalayan Adventures, Treks 'n Rapids, The Organisers, Ultimate Travels Pvt. Ltd and many more, have special sections to look after in-bound and out-bound corporate retreats.

"We have a special corporate outdoor training package which offers participants the opportunity to learn to be a team player first, a team builder next, and, finally, a team leader. It strengthens the will, perseverance, tolerance and acceptance of employees," says Ankit Sood, managing host of Sunshine Himalayan Adventures, a company that boasts clients such as Reliance, TERI, and Young President Organization, USA. The company calls its programme CAT (Corporate Adventure Training) and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions).

Team-building adventures, experiential workshops based on leadership, communications, team assessments and strategic planning are the focal points for such training.

"The main motive for organising these programmes is to develop sportsmanship and competitive spirit among colleagues. There's always a win-win or win-lose chance for participants in these programmes," says Rupali Issar, director, Ultimate Travels Pvt. Ltd. Any good campsite or retreat made

TALK TO US
Discovered a new destination? Want to write to us about your latest vacation? Write to us at: traveldeskkolkata@hindustantimes.com



WITH DEMANDS TO PERFORM BETTER GROWING BY THE DAY, COMPANIES ARE LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED TO KEEP UP THE MOTIVATION LEVELS OF THEIR EMPLOYEES



keeping corporate clients and outdoor adventures in mind, should have a number of exciting activities, such as white water rafting on the Ganga, mountain biking, night hiking, trekking and rock climbing. All these activities are usually combined with specially executed outdoor management development games as spider's web, eskimo walk and others, which facilitate a high level of team building, leadership skill development, motivation and much more.

"The biggest thing is the way people de-stress while participating in adventure sports. Participants learn to conquer their worst fears, be it the fear of heights after a rock climbing session or the fear of water after rafting," says Pranav Kukreti, of Treks 'n Rapids.

Besides de-stressing, these programmes rejuvenate employees. Kukreti says, "This is the best rejuvenation therapy and we call it 'sustainable euphoria'. People remember these experiences and derive strength from them."

Treks 'n Rapids boasts a clientele such as Reliance ADAG, Ranbaxy, Procter & Gamble, Tata Motors Ltd,

Tata Consultancy Services, ING, KPMG and Delphi Automotive Systems, and they prefer locations such as Whispering Pines, Jwarna and Aryanam in Uttarakhand, Matheran in western India, Yercaud in south India and Darjeeling.

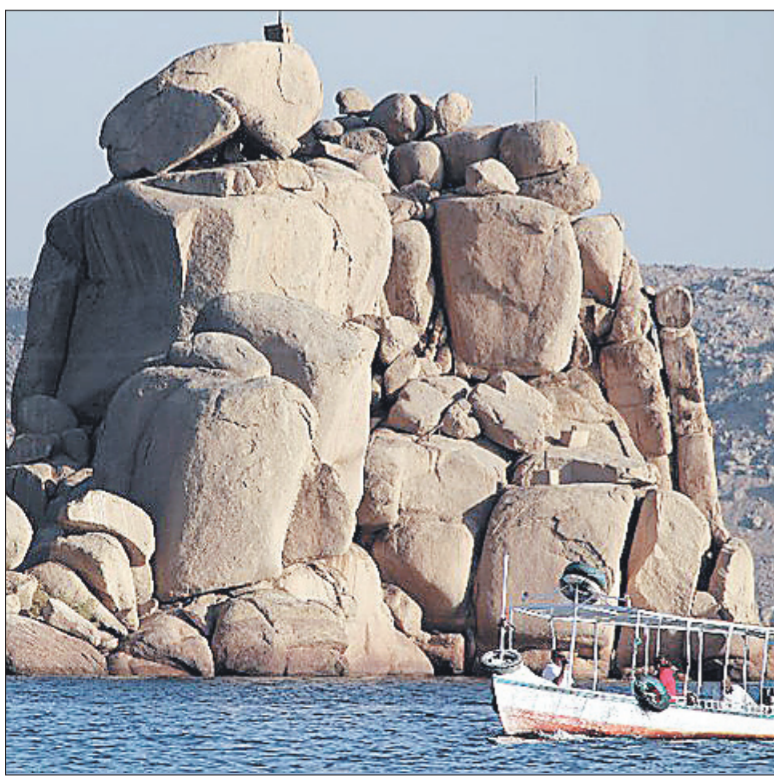
Psychological sessions are an integral part of corporate retreats. "We engage in various counselling sessions with international motivational speakers such as Jeff Salz, Vince Poscente and George Walther. For a new team, we have induction exercises that bring the team together," says Sood. Treks 'n Rapids believes in creating psychological situations through involving activities with the help of sensitive counselling and feedback.

Many employees have benefited from such programmes. "I went on one of these tours in September. I had an excellent time with my colleagues and we tried out various activities," says Vinit Choubey, a financial analyst from Delhi, who went to Bangkok for such a holiday.



■ Employees take part in the CAT and MICE programme.

In the land of pharaohs and pyramids



■ Cruising the Nile.

PHOTO: ARINDAM SIL

GIFT OF THE NILE

As you cruise along the river, the archaeological remains of the ancient civilisation take you on a ride through the corridors of history

Arindam Sil
letters@hindustantimes.com

Egypt conjures up images of pyramids and the Sphinx in front of our eyes. And my last vacation to this magical country where history seems to be alive was almost a dream come true. It was like a time machine had taken us back to an ancient civilisation by the Nile.

I went with my wife and daughter and some of my relatives. We flew to Dubai and, from there, took a flight to Cairo. I had always wanted to take my daughter, Sonika, to Egypt because she loves history and anything that has a lot of stories revolving around it.

From Cairo, we went on to Giza, which was an overnight trip in a mag-



■ The sun-dappled Philae temple and (right) the Luxor temple.

PHOTOS: ARINDAM SIL

nificent train. Soon, it was time for a cruise on the Nile. We were retracing a royal route, since the pharaohs also cruised the Nile. Along the river, the vista of villages in the shade of gracefully swaying palms was breathtaking.

We visited the Philae temple, which had been submerged for 60 years, on an island on Lake Nasser. The boat ride to the lake was out of this world, with the sunset providing a perfect backdrop.

We saw the Kom Ombo temple and the Edfu temple. However, the best part of the journey was a long drive in the Sahara. We went to the temple complex of Abu Simbel, which was built centuries ago. The constructions of pharaoh Ramses II against the backdrop of the desert were fascinating to behold. Something even more enchanting was

in store later — a mile-long mirage. Karnak temple, Luxor temple and the Obelisk are certain things that are better experienced than explained. We felt insignificant in front of the grand structures of the Sphinx and the Great Pyramid. I felt like a pharaoh when I rode on a stallion. We thoroughly enjoyed the Galabya party during our cruise. At this party, I discovered that my daughter is an excellent belly dancer.

I bought an original papyrus, an Egyptian cat statue made of phosphorus stone and many other souvenirs to savour the memories of Egypt. Although I am back home now, I can't forget the taste of Egyptian delicacies, especially the hummus.

(Arindam Sil is an actor)
As told to Tasmayee Laha Roy

