



# TENTS AND TRAILS

WILD CAMPING CHRONICLES

RATHEESH MENON



# **Tents and Trails**

**Wild Camping Chronicles**

**First Edition**

**Author**

**Ratheesh Menon**



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# **Dedication To**

*Mittu and Reshmi*

'The two stars in my life'



# Foreword

When Ratheesh first told me he had written a book about his camping trips across India, I was immediately intrigued. And while I've known him for years, I got a true sense of his adventurous spirit on a trip to Melkotte, where we trekked to an exotic temple atop a hill in Karnataka. I still remember his enthusiasm as he explained the legends of the place, bringing history to life with every word. That same passion and sense of wonder are what you'll find on every page of this book.

As a writer, I believe the best stories aren't just about where you go, but how you see the world. In his debut travel journal, Ratheesh has a unique gift for turning a simple journey into a profound exploration. He doesn't just chronicle his adventures; he invites you into them, sharing a powerful perspective that will stay with you long after you've finished the last page.

There is a line in his book that perfectly captures the heart of his philosophy: **'I want to say one thing: if you are a human, start counting the sunrises and sunsets no matter where you live on earth and do not miss it if possible.'**

This single line is proof of the honesty and deep appreciation you'll find in these pages. It's a book that reminds us to slow down, to look closer, and to find the extraordinary in the everyday. For anyone who has ever felt the pull of the open road or simply wants to see the world from a different perspective, this book is an absolute gift. I wish him all the very best with this first book and can't wait for you, dear reader, to experience this journey for yourself.

*K. Hari Kumar*  
12 August, 2025

# Preface

To portray writing a book as a humungous task, would be an understatement. Printed words get recorded into history and remain in existence until the end of the world; and as I love History, I want to be a part of it!

At the beginning I was thinking hard about what I wanted to convey through my book - what kind of experience did I want the reader to go through? That question was a hard nut to crack especially since it was my real-life camping stories and episodes laden with wildlife encounters that I wanted my readers to experience. So, I thought of keeping the major core of the book as is experience of my life and then combining a little fiction in the details to render it readable, obviously taking a slight writer's liberty as needed.

What you are going to read is the indelible impression of India's forests, wildlife and nature on the canvas of Camping with a lot of real-life incidents penned to delight the wildlife enthusiast in every one of you! This is also a sneak peek into my life - an ordinary person born in a middle-class family in the 80s who travelled across the map of India for some extraordinary experiences. Few of them I have put down here, and other remaining stories will come along with my next book delving into mysticism, supernatural and energy realms; so, wait for that.

I was blessed to travel the length of India harmoniously along with the torrential flow of nature's exploratory consciousness, as a result I was gratified to face mysterious wildlife experiences fearlessly and with an explorer's enthusiasm along the path that have been graced by great explorers and travelers since millennia. This book throws light on the 20 wonderful

years of my tenting/camping experiences majorly in the mountains and forests giving me rare experiences unavailable to many in the cities. Of course, I would not want to spill anything further about the book, because that is for you readers to discover as you journey through the pages of this book.

If there is one thing I would like to underline and emphasize, it is that these natural world experiences were not anything that I went looking for. On the contrary, they sought me out through Nature's direction. That is truly what makes those experiences all the more precious. I would say it was nature's teachings for me, to understand it in depth along with its spiritual nuances.

If this book gives you an understanding that there are beautiful things beyond our mundane city or town lives right there on this earth, and that you can capture it with your five senses and also engage your sixth sense, if you are left inspired to explore the wild side of nature with mysterious experiences, if there is an awareness that comes along about the intricacies and details of mother nature, if you explore the nature around you, the game sanctuaries with more wonder and respect; I would consider this humble effort of mine a grand success.

As I grew reading a lot of wildlife accounts of Ruskin Bond, Jim Corbett, Kenneth Anderson, Ullas Karanth and the likes, you will see a lot of observations and knowledge inspired by them rendering this book also a small kind of field book of wildlife knowledge. I thank all these wildlife conservationists and also WWF India, Greenpeace, Isha Conservation, Indian Forest offices etc who have given the awareness of conservation and preservation to me and I would like to relay it across to every one of you in the best interest of our beloved Earth and the earthlings who depend on it for survival and protection. Let us also fight the greedy multi nationals, industries, bureaucrats,

politicians and individuals who want to destroy nature and forests for their materialistic petty gains.

Let us not leave the fight to the green warriors rather may we all become individual green warriors fighting for our nature, because our lives, sustenance and emancipation are deeply dependent on mother nature! I offer gratitude and bows to our forests, mountains, farmers and caretakers of the natural resources because of whom I have had all these wonderful experiences which are more valuable than a billion rupees. So, let's pledge to nurture, care and grow more forests in this beautiful land India.

My sincere thanks to my family, friends and finally IIP Publication for enabling me to come out with this dream of mine.

I also would like to thank each and every one of you for taking time out and reading this book. It is my wish and prayer that every moment spent with this book leaves you mesmerized with nature and you feel positively vibrant.

I hereby present this book to the world, prostrating in reverence, before the almighty Krsna for making me finally an author, a dream cherished for a long time. Please read, assimilate, reflect, enjoy and spread the word so this work can lead to many more wonderful works from my side. Thank you!

# Acknowledgement

My debts in getting this story off the ground and becoming an author are significant. First and foremost, I owe a deep thanks to all the great authors who kindled my deep reading interest over the years with observation, that matured into wanting to become an author.

I would like to thank my father for the good education provided, which put me on the pedestal leading to where I am today. I would like give a huge thanks to my wife Reshmi for providing the confidence, encouragement and being a reviewer of this humble work of the subject matter I love the most 'Nature & Wildlife'.

I am grateful to the first reviewers - my brother Ramesh, good friends Shanosh and Kodanda Ram, and Rajani S for providing some crucial feedback and inputs in bringing this dream to life. It reassured me that it was a story worth telling and sharing with the world, of my real-life camping experiences come stories in the jungles of India.

I am very grateful to Authors and Naturalists/Conservationists like Jim Corbett, Ruskin Bond, Kenneth Anderson, Ullas Karanth for they provided the motivation for penning something close to Nature and Wild encounters. I am greatly indebted to all friends who have been part of the camping stories in this book and had contributed to some great memories in my life; specifically, my best friends Jacob Tom and Roshan Ali. Also, I would like to mention that without the great canvas of India and its mesmerizing wilderness and nature, this would not have ever been possible.

Very thankful to IIP Publishers and its staff for everything. Like to mention the as it took me some time to get the manuscript ready owing to few personal injuries. I am thankful for every bit of the production of this book being taken care of.

Reshmi and Mittu were my cheering squad. The support in the writing endeavour during weekends and late nights is very much appreciated. And, Reshmi thanks to reading multiple versions of the manuscript and providing key suggestions. A word of gratefulness to my sweet home, which provided me abundant ambiance in midst of Nature to write this close to the heart first book. And finally, thanks to the Universe and God Almighty!

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Ratheesh Menon** is an Explorer-Traveler, Spiritualist, Yoga teacher, Sound healer, Graphologist, Hiker, Mountaineer, Photographer, Tourism Entrepreneur and IT Business Consultant. He has been studying Yoga, Nature and Mysticism for the last 20 years and believes that Nature is the greatest spiritual teacher and healer, in which forests and culture has a great role to play. Ratheesh strongly believes that life's great mysteries can be unlocked only by an adventurous spirit leading to self actualization, expression and realization for an individual. His optimism and penchant for life spills from his own experiences and Yogic way of exploring life. He loves his country Bharat and at heart considers it a blessing to live in this country and know so many stories indigenous to this land; which he considers to speak through his books. He considers his passion for Nature as a great blessing and intends to portray the same in his books. He loves to ride his cycle, hike in Western Ghats, do breathwork, play with family, meditate, read books, work as a tourism operator or hone his skills as a polymath. His motto in life is "dive right in, find yourself first within – Like within, like without" all good things will follow!



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