

HYDERABAD

ROAD LESS  TRAVELLED

On the rocks

Jankampet offers an adrenaline rush as well as placid vistas, writes SOUVIK CHOWDHURY

JANKAMPET IS 170 kilometres away from Hyderabad, a sleepy hamlet in Nizamabad where one would not think of much action, not in the least of an expression as extreme as, "Osama Bin Laden", which was exactly what one found in one of the many rocks surrounding the pristine Asok Sagar.

Still waters run deep, they say. I thought as much, only such an outrageous admission disturbed me and it appeared so, the tranquillity of the place.

It takes only two rupees to enter Asok Sagar – a lesser-known tourist destination tucked away behind a thicket of date palm trees on the Nizamabad-Basar highway. A small arch leads to a picture-perfect spectacle – blue water and moss-laden rocks edging it, orange-coloured palm trees and birds – they of many a hue, flocking down for a fish or two. The grass – it appeared to me was greener there, and the goats simply agreed.

The sublime freshness of the sight washed me totally clean, after a dusty drive that left me dog-tired. Thoughts and exhaustion were way behind when Shekhar Raju asked me to join him for a boat ride. It was a blue six-seater that required a 25HP motor and someone like Shekhar to steer it to a speed when it would just glide as if not on water, but on air.

A certificate holder from the National Institute of Wa-



ter sports, Goa – Shekhar can scare the daylights out of anyone even if he remotely senses his passengers are adventurous; he also doubles up as a lifeguard.

It took considerable persuasion to take the controls of the motorboat from its owner, and then it was simply rocking! I suspected my hair would fly off my head. Not close to anything I had driven

before. A 20-minute ride on the blue beauty costs Rs. 20. An encore was a natural choice. And then I repeated again.

Few snakes inhabit the rocks. I was only following my instinct – keeping off the rock that apparently bore Bin Laden's signature only to realise later, the most notorious snakes lived under it. It did not surprise me.

A walk through the rock garden is one way to build up an appetite.

To look at the menu in the restaurant looking over the lake, is another. Names like *Tangdi Kawab* inherently seemed *La Jawab*, but I didn't feel like trying.

As I departed, vice-chairman, HUDA, Ashok Kumar came to mind naturally. But for him, the place would have been in boondocks. The villagers, as a gesture of goodwill, renamed Jankampet Cheruvu as Asok Sagar. ■

Where: 170 kilometres from Hyderabad, 7 kilometres from Nizamabad
How to get there: Regular buses are available from Hyderabad, but private transport is recommended. In the APTDC package tour from Hyderabad to Basar, Asok Sagar is a stopover.