

TMNP - VAMA Eco-tour

TMNP - VAMA is special program initiated by Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program (www.tribalmensa.org) for underprivileged gifted girls. The goal of TMNP - VAMA is to develop a world intelligent population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems. And they have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitment to work individually and collectively towards solutions of current problems and prevention of new ones. To achieve the same TMNP-VAMA wish to organise Ecotour. Ecotour is an educational programme, which is learner- centred. An ecotour focuses on five elements - awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation.

Why Eco-tour? Eco-tour is a part of environmental (in broader perspective includes nature, society) education program. Environmental education is not a subject specific content area. Rather, it is an educational process made up of five elements: Awareness, Knowledge, Attitude, Skills & Participation.

Awareness: Environmental education seeks to build awareness - both a sensory awareness around us, as well as an awareness of societal issues & problem - solving strategies.

Knowledge: Increased awareness encourages students to improve their knowledge & understanding of natural processes.

Attitude: Students' may change or mature as they develop a deeper appreciation of & respect the natural world & for individual people & cultures. Once, they see their actions made a difference; they will feel a greater responsibility to the environment & begin to pursue other environmental endeavours.

Skills: The development process skill involves teaching students how to think what not to think. This enables them to become more effective decision-makers. Decision making skills includes critical thinking, creative thinking, communication skills, analytical & observation skills, negotiation & conflict resolutions & the ability to identify the values.

Participation: Ultimately, the goal of environmental education is to encourage students to apply their knowledge, skills & commitment outside the classroom. Participation can mean changing personal behaviour, or involving one self in decision-making.

The important part of this Eco-tour is that the students themselves are involved in planning and execution of the Eco-tour.

Orientation: As any tour requires planning and preparation, the co-ordinator and eager Mensans work hard at sorting individual roles and responsibilities as groups and individual tasks before the tour begins. Free time is spent in brainstorming and generating ideas, striving to bring excellence into their work. This period helps in learning, and relearning all their pre-organisational skills. The tension of executing a mammoth task for their group members keeps excellence as the main criteria.

Theme Groups: Participant Mensans will be divided into 4 or 5 groups. Each group will be given different content subject for study. Each group will have a group leader who will manage and co-ordinate his/her group, assistant and reporter. The focus of the theme group was finding different ways of contacting people in their respective field areas and gathering concrete information to enrich their knowledge about that content subject. Children will work in unison and inter-depend on others for the smooth functioning of their

respective task. This will help, as they have to put individual differences behind and work together to achieve their task. They will learn to handle complaints, criticisms, praise and compliments alike, to be able to draw learning points to better the next day and thus making each struggle a step towards success.

Administration Groups: Along with theme group, the entire population is divided into different groups to take Ecotour administration responsibilities. The admin groups are Travel, Food, Discipline, Permits, permission and report writing and Entertainment.

These groups along with theme groups start working towards goal of the tour before the Ecotour.

Purpose of this Eco-tour is to nurture:

1. Networking skill
2. Communication skill
3. Excellence in allotted work.
4. Unique and creative ideas.
5. Different approach to studies.
6. Organizational skills.
7. Responsibility sharing.
8. Studying diversity (culture, social, ecological and historical) of India.
9. Observation Skill
10. Representation Skill

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