

Entanbeni

I have read, seen pictures and watched many video clips of Wild Africa. But I never got the chance to enjoy the real beauty of it until July 2002. I was lucky to be one of the three Vietnamese representatives to join the "International Wilderness Experience Programme" organized by the Cathay Pacific and UNESCO in Johannesburg, South Africa. The nature reserve, named Entabeni, or “friendship” in native south african, was totally isolated from the busy and crowded streets of the city. It was just the whole team of 60 teenagers age from 16 to 18 from 12 different nations, our officers, and nature itself!

The twelve days there were significant. We did and learned so much about the environment. But most of all, I discovered the real me, the me that was still hiding inside. I managed to take care of myself, and found myself much more confident although it was the first time traveling alone. We tackled many problems, unimportant or serious, which enhanced my leadership and ability to work successfully in a team with others. I was more outgoing and eager to share my thoughts.

Besides knowledge, the trip gave me wonderful friends from Asia and South Africa. We were strangers at first but were so close finally, as young people with dreams to build a better world and healthier environment. Each country had the chance to introduced its culture by showing maps, performing traditional songs or dances. At the mini earth summit, we Vietnamese shared our present environmental problems and available solutions.

Although we can not involve ourselves in big national projects but we realized how valuable our environment is and the need to save it. The trip left me with an unforgettable experience that I will bring with me throughout my life. Returning home, my desire to protect our environment grew stronger. Africa has lions and rhinos that need to be protected, Vietnam has sea turtles and many endangered species. We have put much effort to improve our lives, but have accidentally destroyed the habitat of others. Nature is something we are privileged to have, yet not everlasting. We, young generations, are highly responsible to "think globally and act locally", to save the most precious gift of life.