

# Outlook traveller




**ODISHA**  
INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET.

# ODISHA

## Welcomes You Again

THE LAND OF BEACHES AND TEMPLES, OF SERENE  
DRIVES AND COOL GLAMPING, SAFE AND SPECIAL






# THE IS FOR

 Puri-Konark Marine Drive



*Discover secrets at every corner*



An aerial photograph showing a two-lane asphalt road that curves from the bottom left towards the top right. The road is flanked by a dense, vibrant green forest. At the top of the image, the road meets a sandy beach, which is bordered by the ocean with white, foamy waves crashing onto the shore. The text 'ROAD WAITING YOU!' is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the upper portion of the image.

# ROAD WAITING YOU!



**ODISHA**  
INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET.

 [odishatourismofficial](#)

 [odisha\\_tourism](#)





**Shri Naveen Patnaik,**  
*Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha*

## FROM THE CM'S DESK

**T**he first step to envisioning Odisha as a tourism hub of global standards is to marry its substance with a contemporary style. With breakthrough innovation in new tourism offerings, Odisha is succeeding at commanding the attention of discerning travellers.

Despite consecutive years of challenges to the tourism and hospitality sector—Cyclone Fani followed by a paralysing pandemic—recent developments are raising hopes for a stellar revival. Our conviction is founded in our zeal to build back better, as we have done repeatedly after recurrent cyclones, while progressively improving our capacity to mitigate adverse impacts.

Having set a benchmark in luxury glamping through the Marine Drive Eco Retreat at Konark last year, we have now scaled up the Eco Retreats to five unique locations—Konark, Hirkud, Bhitarkanika, Daringbadi and Satkosia. The Eco Retreats will offer tourists an excellent opportunity to discover Odisha's diverse tourism offerings, in style.

The vastness and beautiful diversity of Odisha can best be appreciated by cruising to and through the state's excellent road network. The 'Odisha By Road' campaign witnessed a great flag-off on World Tourism Day 2020—during which superbikers from across Odisha rode a narrative-changing ride to various community-managed ecotourism camps in a mark of support for the

UNWTO campaign for rural tourism.

Odisha has pioneered the community-managed model of nature camping, with several properties having earned handsomely, and with the local community retaining the revenues. It has set the template in sustainable tourism not just for the state but for India as a whole.

Lord Jagannath's blessings brought great news towards the end of 2020, with the beautiful Golden Beach at Puri receiving the Blue Flag certification by FEE Denmark by conforming to the stringent environmental norms and ensuring world-class sustainable tourist amenities. The renowned eco-label will add to the charm of the heritage city, already elevated by the Augmentation of Basic Amenities & Development of Heritage and Architecture at Puri (ABADHA).

Our guests' safety and well being are paramount to us. We have engaged with all stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sector across the state and have provided in-depth training on safety and hygiene protocols, in a manner consistent with Odisha's stellar management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I call upon tourists from across India to resume their quest for travel with Odisha. I wish you good health and happiness while exploring Odisha, India's best-kept secret.

Jai Jagannath!



# FOREWORD

*Dear Readers,*

As we enter the peak tourism season of 2020 with a hope of a healthier and happier future, it is needless to re-emphasise how well-deserved a getaway is for the entire country that has pulled through this challenging year.

Odisha welcomes you with open arms and with the assurance of your safety and well being. Be it an adventurous rendezvous or rejuvenating leisure trips, spiritual sojourns or trails through wilderness, spontaneous road trips or gastronomic revelations—each experience of yours will be worry free, since Odisha Tourism has undertaken a vast and inclusive drive to sensitise and train service providers across the state in COVID-19 safety protocols.

I am sure that this special edition by *Outlook Traveller* will bring you closer to us. While Odisha Tourism is accessible at a mere click, through our award-winning digital initiative, it is time for you to witness the revelation of India's best-kept secret in person. Wish you safe and happy travels!

**Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi**  
*Minister of State (IC) for Tourism,  
Odia Language, Literature and Culture,  
Government of Odisha*



# IT'S COMPLETELY SAFE TO TRAVEL IN ODISHA



**I**n anticipation of resumption of post-monsoon tourist activity, the Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha, has been working with the state's tourism and hospitality sector through advocacy groups such as the Hotels & Restaurants Association of Odisha (HRAO) to ensure high standards of hygiene and tourist safety. District-level teams plan to familiarise management and employees of tourist destinations and service providers across the spectrum, based on the COVID-19 Preparedness Protocols for Tourist Destinations issued by the Department of Tourism.

In organising the Jagannath Rath Yatra 2020, the Government of Odisha undertook comprehensive preventive measures, including screening of over 2,000 servitors and about 30 police platoons for COVID-19 prior to deployment, besides imposing a curfew across Puri to prevent crowding.

Prime hotels and resorts in the state have brought in technology-leveraged sanitisation mechanisms to implement safety & hygiene protocols and operational recommendations for tourism service providers issued in May 2020 by the Ministry of Tourism.

Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) was among the early adapters to these protocols. These practices that were put in place while servicing the lodging, boarding

and transport requirements of healthcare service providers and tourists have been maintained diligently.

Ecotour Odisha, renowned for its game-changing model of community-managed ecotourism camps across the state's protected areas, has instituted specialised training for its staff, in collaboration with reputed institutions such as Institute of Hotel Management Catering Technology & Applied Nutrition (IHM) and Indian Institute of Tourism & Travel Management (IITTM) Bhubaneswar. The ecotourism workforce has been uncompromising in its commitment to responsible tourism, and has helped preserve visitors' confidence in quality.

The Department of Tourism has also engaged with all the stakeholders and has provided training on COVID-19 protocols. Consistent with Odisha's stellar management of the pandemic, the Eco Retreats will be implemented in complete compliance with guidelines and SOPs prescribed by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. Even at the highly anticipated Eco Retreat Odisha the SOPs will be implemented including contactless check-in and check-out, PPE kits for staff, safe procurement of consumables, regular disinfection of all rooms, thermal screening, provision of a comprehensive sanitation package for each checked-in guest, luggage sanitisation, social distancing norms, etc.





# A DESTINATION LIKE NO OTHER

**R**ich culture, glorious history, virgin beaches, bounty of nature and wildlife, abundance of spirituality and a hint of royalty. When in Odisha, there is no dearth of options to explore. Set on the eastern coast of India with the waters of the Bay of Bengal swirling along its boundaries and wedged between the states of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, the coastal state of Odisha is the one-stop destination for all kinds of travellers. With a footfall of nearly a million tourists every year, it is called the 'Soul of

India'. In its long-spanning history, Odisha has been known by several names including Kalinga and Utkala and ultimately rose to become the cultural trove of the country, as we know it today. As you delve deeper into the rich history, you can find several museums across the state that stand testament to its glorious past. Be it the lush green and hilly terrain or its coastal plains, its rich cultural festivals or the Buddhist legacy, its palm-fringed silver beaches or the numerous rivers, there's an elusive Odisha waiting to be explored.







# ALONG THE HERITAGE TRAIL

**O**disha is one of the country's most culturally and historically rich states. With its grand, ancient temples, rock edicts and shrines that host many a fair and festival, it beckons religious tourists, heritage buffs and those in love with grand monuments and superlative craftsmanship.

The Golden Triangle circuit connecting the bustling historical capital of Bhubaneswar, the sacred coastal town of Puri and the Unesco World Heritage Site of Konark, is a great way to experience the most iconic of the state's offerings. One may start at Bhubaneswar or Puri and head on along either arm of the triangle, witnessing light-and-sound shows (at all three), take short detours such as the one to the crafts centre of Raghurajpur.

Strewn around with monasteries, stupas, relics, seals, stone tablets and statues, the Diamond Triangle comprising Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri and Udaygiri is an integral part of India's Buddhist trail. Located in the Jajpur district, within close proximity to each other, the three sites can be part of a long day trip from Bhubaneswar. One could begin at Ratnagiri, and head further along to Udaygiri and Lalitgiri to discover a slice of history waiting to be discovered.

The periphery of the otherwise bustling city of Bhubaneswar offers the twin delights of the Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves (approximately 5kms







away) and the Dhauligiri Shanti Stupa (approximately 8kms away). The former is a collection of 30-odd **gumphas** (caves) that were chiselled out of the two hills at the behest of Mahameghavahana king Kharavela, as residential cloisters for Jain ascetics in the first century BC, and bear ornate inscriptions and sculptures on their panels. The sculptures on the inside of the caves depict episodes from King Kharavela's life.

Dhauligiri, on the banks of the river Daya, is supposedly the site of the Kalinga war and the subsequent transformation of Chanda Ashoka into Dharma Ashoka. Cradled within its lush environs is the Dhauli Shanti Stupa or Peace Pagoda, built in 1972 by the Kalinga Nippon Buddha Sangha and Japan Buddha Sangh. Worth seeing is the Ashokan edict in Brahmi along with the accompanying

elephant sculpture.

As one reaches Konark, the ruined grandiloquence of the Sun Temple, with its ornate carvings, sculptures and temple structures, comes alive with the first light of day, as the sun's rays fall on the delicately carved depictions of celestial congress. Built in granite, this Black Pagoda of yore—now a Unesco World Heritage Site—is quite literally akin to a chariot stopped in time, with originally seven horses and 12 pairs of wheels.

The highly revered 12th-century Jagannath Temple of Puri is the site of the famous annual affair of the Ratha Yatra. The structure presently has four compartments and four gates in the outer of its two concentric walls. The premises also house a lot of smaller shrines and platforms, seven wells, two gardens and a sacred banyan tree.





# GET INTO THE SWING OF THINGS

Any trip to the sylvan state of Odisha will be incomplete without experiencing its popular folk dances like Odissi, Chhau and Gotipua to name a few. Archaeological evidence suggests that Odissi might be the oldest dance form of India. This ancient dance form is a beautiful depiction of mythical and religious stories and devotional poems. The themes for Odissi are usually drawn from Vaishnavism and stories surrounding various Hindu deities. You'll even see sculptures of Odissi dancers carved on the walls and pillars of the

heritage monuments across the state.

Then there's Chhau, a part of the Unesco Intangible Cultural Heritage in India and a beautiful blend of dance and martial arts. Chhau dancers can be seen decked up in attractive face masks during the performances. Try and schedule your visit around the spectacular Konark Festival, hosted by the Odisha Tourism Board. The festival invites classical dancers from all corners of the country, who perform various dance forms like Odissi, Bharatanatyam and Kathak.







# RETAIL THERAPY ARTS AND CRAFTS





Odisha is nothing less than a paradise for the tasteful shopper. When you're done marvelling at the natural and heritage sights across the state, indulge in some retail therapy. Look for the Sambalpuri Ikat saris, known for their attractive geometrical and curvilinear patterns and feathery appearance. Men can opt for Sambalpuri shirts, which are great during summer. Art lovers can head to the small artists' village of Raghurajpur and shop for traditional handicrafts. If you love appliqué work, head to Pipli for some of the best options. From bedsheets to wall hangings, appliqué handicrafts feature gorgeous floral patterns and images of Lord Jagannath and his siblings.





An aerial photograph of a winding asphalt road that curves through a dense, vibrant green forest. The road has white dashed lines and a solid white edge line. A small white vehicle is visible on the lower right curve of the road. The surrounding forest is thick with various shades of green, and some trees with yellow foliage are visible on the right side.

# ODISHA BY ROAD

Odisha has hitherto been known primarily for its beautiful Golden Triangle of Bhubaneswar-Puri-Konark, pivoted on Lord Jagannath's seat. Several other treasures nestled in the state's hinterland are waiting to be explored. The state boasts of an excellent road network that is not being sufficiently utilised. The scenic roads of Odisha can put many states on the eastern coast to shame. Largely unexplored, these routes have secrets hidden in every corner. In order to boost tourism, the Odisha Tourism Board recently announced the launch of the 'Odisha By Road' campaign. The tourism board has mapped all the important destinations which can be explored by road and has curated driving itineraries for inter-state and intra-state tourists.

The Cascade Trail from Ranchi to Keonjhar not only takes you on a journey across a picturesque route, where you get to see miles and miles of nature on both sides of the road, but also offers a glimpse into the rich heritage and culture of the region. Make a pit-stop at Ghatagaon to pick up a few terracotta handicrafts.

The Tiger Trail beginning from Jamshedpur and Ranchi to Similipal Tiger Reserve is a delight for wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers alike. Replete







with cascading waterfalls like Sitakund, Joranda, Devkunda, and Dudma, the drive promises to be relaxing and enriching.

Reaching for the Hills, an itinerary modelled by the tourism board starts from Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and ends at Daringbadi. Set at an altitude of 3,000ft, it is the only destination in Odisha that witnesses snowfall during the winters. Dotted with pine trees, waterfalls, coffee and pepper gardens, it is the home of one of the most ancient tribes of India called 'Kuthia Kondas'. Often known as the 'Kashmir of Odisha', Daringbadi offers an eclectic mix of cultural, tribal and nature tourism. One can also head to Mandasaru from here. Often called the 'Silent Valley of Odisha' due to its frequent weather changes, mesmerising beauty and rich biodiversity, it's a trekker's paradise. The Mandasaru Gorge ecosystem is located in the eastern part of Kandhamal district of Odisha and is surrounded by dense tropical moist deciduous forest on all sides.

One could also drive up to the Hirakud Reservoir from Raipur or Bilaspur, as part of the 'Quest for Odisha's Wild West' trail. Hirakud is the world's longest earthen dam and stands across the Mahanadi River. One can make one's way to the several minarets nearby. The Gandhi Minar, a watchtower located on top of a hill, offers a bird's-eye view of the Hirakud Dam. The beauty of the Hirakud Dam is best experienced through a stunning 21-kilometre drive across the dyke.

Hit NH-26 from Visakhapatnam to head to Koraput via the Deomali Hills. This monsoon escape itinerary allows you to make a pit stop at Mangalajodi and enjoy the scenic beauty of the Araku Valley. Dotted with forests, waterfalls, terraced valleys and darting springs, Koraput is a treasure trove of nature, tribal life and history. Nestled between the Eastern Ghats and some breathtaking scenery, Koraput has some of the major rivers of Odisha passing through it, namely Machhakunda, Vamsadhara and Kolab. The district is primarily dominated by the indigenous or tribal communities.

The Puri-Konark Marine Drive is among the most popular long-drive routes in the state. While one side of the road is covered in a lush green canopy, the other side witnesses the crashing waves of the sea.

The 'Deep into the Mangroves' route from Kolkata to Bhitarkanika National Park and the 'Cruising along the Circars' from Visakhapatnam to Chilika Lake are also an integral part of the 'Odisha By Road' campaign.





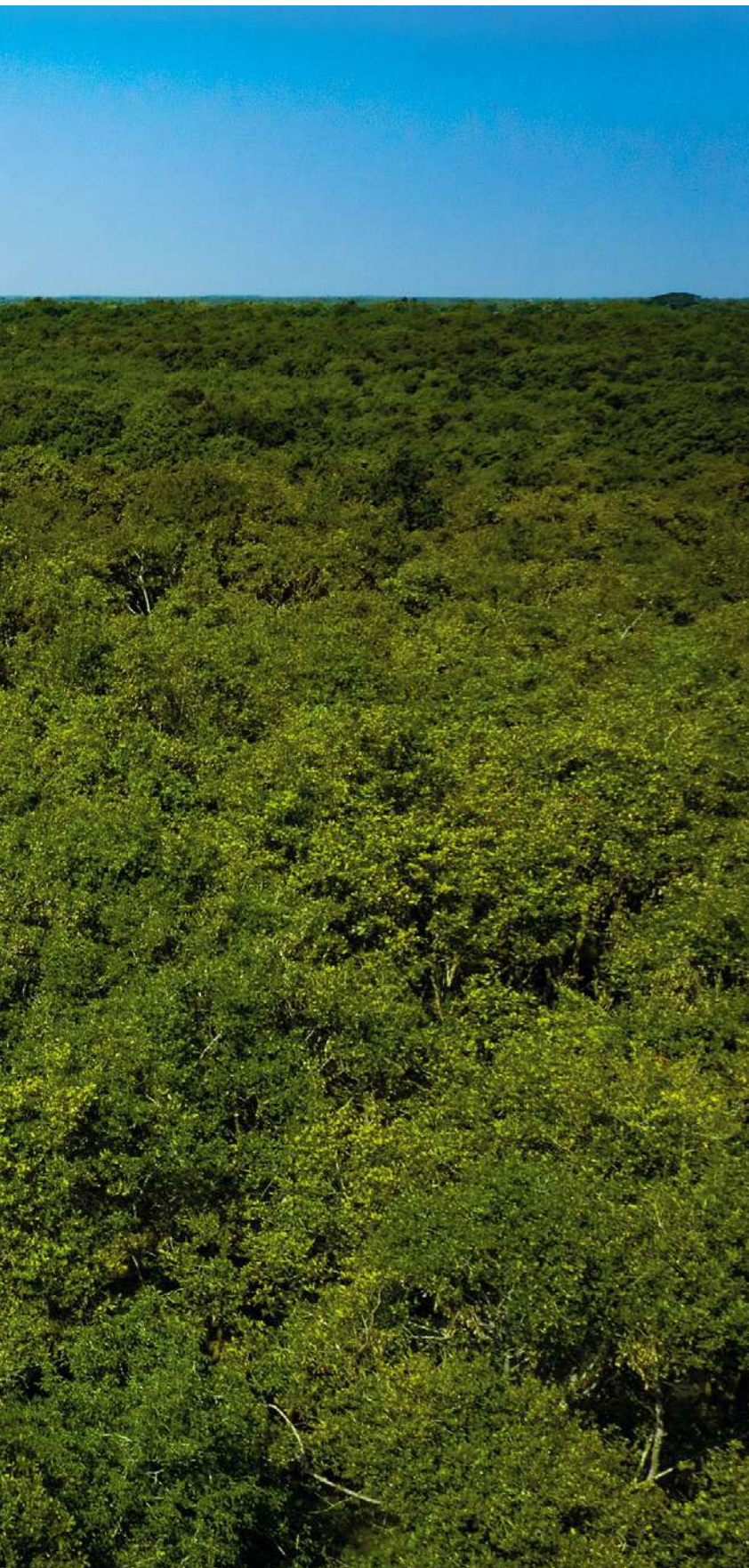






# GOING THE GREEN WAY





Odisha is richly endowed with nature, wildlife and biodiversity, thereby making it an ideal escape for a sustainable getaway. The ecotourism camps and corridors in the state often make it a traveller's first choice for a nature trail. One can choose from a variety of activities such as trekking, sightseeing, boating and birding when in Odisha. Some of the most preferred destinations for ecotourism in Odisha include the Similipal Tiger and Biosphere Reserve, the Bhitarkanika National Park and the Satkosia Tiger Reserve.

Set in Mayurbhanj, Similipal is where you can experience the calmness of nature. Sprawling over an area of 2,750 sq kms, this tiger reserve is among the first nine designated tiger reserves that were established in 1973. Apart from boasting of a rich vegetation, meandering rivers and cascading waterfalls, it also holds the highest tiger population in the state.

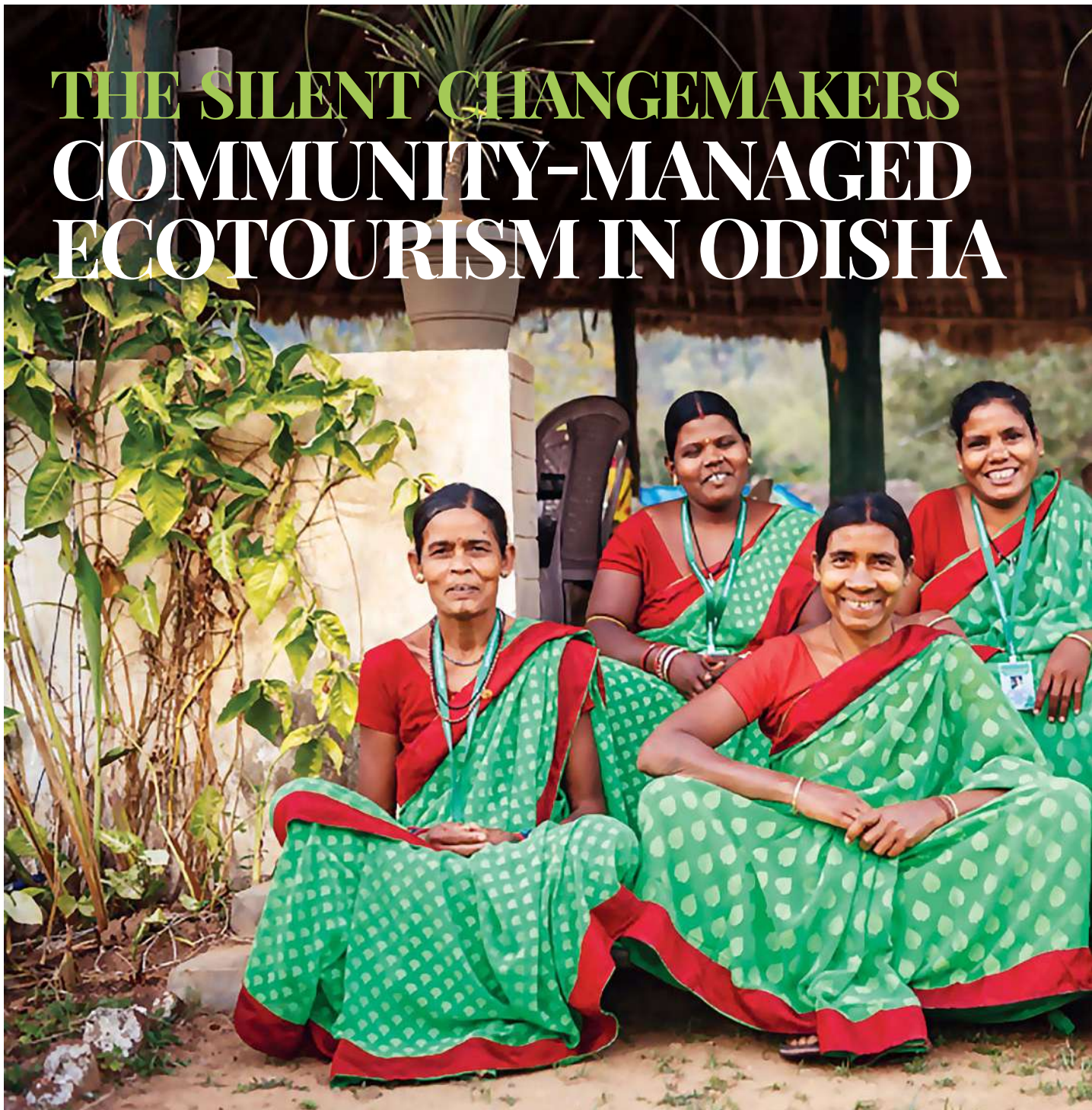
Spread along the Satkosia Gorge along the Mahanadi River, Satkosia Tiger Reserve is a wildlife photographer's delight. The reserve comprises two wildlife sanctuaries—Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary and Baisipalli Sanctuary. Go on a river cruise to catch a glimpse of the many elusive beasts in their natural habitat.

Known for its splendour, the Chandaka-Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary is a colourful blend of semi-evergreen forests, thorny bamboo brakes and sal forests. There are two nature camps within sanctuary premises—the Deras Nature Camp and Godibari Nature Camp, located within the same vicinity and just five kilometres apart. A night stay at Chandaka-Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary, away from the chaos of city life, is precisely what one needs to tune into nature.

When it comes to birding, Chilika, without a doubt, is the ideal choice. Do not miss the annual National Chilika Bird Festival held during the winters. After the riveting success of the first two editions, the state is all set to host the 3rd edition from 8th to 10th January, 2021. Another delightful experience in store for travellers is a visit to the Nalabana Bird Sanctuary, which is open only during the National Chilika Bird Festival. For a unique experience travellers can also head to the houseboats at Chilika Lake and Bhitarkanika National Park and surrender to their serene surroundings. These houseboats are run by private operators on operation and management basis. One of the largest freshwater lakes, the Tampara Lake is also a great avenue for all kinds of watersports. This beautiful lake along with the nearby Chilika Lagoon speaks volumes about the ecological diversity of Odisha.



# THE SILENT CHANGEMAKERS COMMUNITY-MANAGED ECOTOURISM IN ODISHA



**M**inds are powerful and inevitable, if tuned appropriately"—this is the transformational success story that the Forest Department of Odisha has set forth before the world.

Of the total population of Odisha, around 83 per cent live in rural areas and their role in preserving and conserving the natural resources of the state is vital. Realising their role in forest and wildlife conservation, during the year 2016, the Forest and Environment Department launched

an innovative scheme called 'Community Managed Nature Tourism' for providing alternative livelihood to the forest-dependent communities. The new scheme has proven to be beneficial for the rural economy of the state. More than 600 locals in different regions of Odisha are employed in 42 ecotourism nature camps and a majority of them are women. This has been an alternative income for them, as earlier they used to rely on forest produce for their survival by poaching, smuggling, fishing, collecting honey, mahua, firewood, etc.





The local folks have raised the revenue of state ecotourism from 47 lakhs during 2015-16 to 6.85 crores during 2019-20. More than 46,000 visitors from different parts of the world have visited the nature camps during 2019-20. Even during the difficult times of COVID-19, they have displayed an enterprising spirit by performing all their duties and following all the guidelines as issued by the government for the pandemic.

It is praiseworthy that Odisha is the only state to have

adopted the innovative model of community-based ecotourism, where 80 per cent of the share of revenue goes back to the community. Nature tourism has not only reduced the pressure on forest resources but is also an important tool for converting every tourist into a guardian of nature. It has combined experiences from the wild with responsible travel and sustainability and has increased awareness among tourists about the conservation efforts.

For bookings visit **[ecotourodish.com](http://ecotourodish.com)**



# EMERGING BIRDING SITES OF ODISHA, A BIRDWATCHER'S PARADISE

**B**irdwatching is an activity reserved only for the well seasoned; for enthusiasts who can practice utmost patience and perseverance. If you are a wildlife photographer, or simply love spotting new types of species, there's no better place than Odisha. The state is home to over 400 unique avian species, making it one of the best birding places to visit worldwide.

## MANGALAJODI: HAVEN FOR BIRDERS

The Chilika Lake Sanctuary near Puri, has Asia's largest inland seawater lagoon. It is a pear-shaped lake, spread over an area of 1,100 sq km and serves as the largest wintering ground for migratory birds in India. Birdwatchers keep coming back to this destination as it is home to some of the most unique species like sea eagles, greylag geese, and purple moorhen. Chilika proudly hosts the world's largest breeding colonies of flamingoes as well. The lake has many marshlands, of which Mangalajodi is labelled 'birder's haven' and is a must-visit for a spectacular view of some beautiful winged guests.

Until over a decade ago, the primary livelihood of nearly a hundred families in Mangalajodi was based on killing, selling and eating birds—many of them migratory. However, eventually the poachers assembled in a local temple motivated by a local gentleman and pledged against killing their winged guests. Several organisations joined hands to train the poachers to become birding guides and impart knowledge about the ways of the hospitality industry. Madhu Behera, one of the guides, is known widely in the birding circle of India.



## KULDIHA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Located in the southwestern part of Balasore district, the sanctuary covers an area of 272 sq km. The topography of the region supports deciduous, thick sal forests. This area is home to a wide variety of wildlife species including Indian elephants, tiger, leopards, Indian bison, sambar deer, spotted deer, mouse deer, nilgai, **chousingha**, sloth bear, etc. The sanctuary also serves as the abode to a variety of avifauna. Mr Manoranjan Das, a guide and resort owner from Kuldiha, is a well-known snake rescuer and an avid birdwatcher. He has recorded 253 species of birds including Malabar trogon, Indian heart-spotted woodpecker and yellow-rumped flycatcher.

## MUNDALI DAM, CUTTACK

The Mahanadi River is about 900 kilometres long and flows through Chhattisgarh and Odisha. From Chhattisgarh, the river first flows eastward and reaches Odisha. In Odisha, it first reaches Sambalpur, then the Satkosia Gorge, finally entering Mundali on the Cuttack-Athgarh Road. Every year Mundali lures thousands of migratory birds, including many diving ducks. Almost 71 species of birds have been identified from this place. The most important species found here are the rare Indian skimmers. Flocks of endangered Indian skimmers have been also found nesting along the sands of the Mahanadi riverbed in Mundali during the summers. After the Cyclone Phailin, which hit the coast of Odisha in 2013,



three species of oceanic birds from the Atlantic region were spotted here, which was a rare sight.

## BHITARKANIKA NATIONAL PARK

The Bhitarkanika National Park is one of India's biggest estuarine crocodile habitats and a major coastal ecosystem. It was declared as a national park because of its ecological, faunal, floral, geomorphological, zoological association and conservation efforts in 1998. In August 2002, it was designated as the second Ramsar site. Besides the mass nesting of Olive Ridley turtles and saltwater crocodiles, Bhitarkanika is also known for residential and migratory species of birds. Till now, 320 species of birds have been identified. Mr Bijay Kumar Das, an ex-forest employee, and an avid wildlife expert, with his own homestay facilities, has been observing these avian species for a few years now.

## HIRAKUD RESERVOIR

Hirakud is the longest earthen dam in the world and stands across the Mahanadi River in Sambalpur. It was the first major multipurpose river valley project after India's independence in 1947. This man-made structure is located 15 kilometres north of Sambalpur. Every year, thousands of birds migrate to the reservoir, which spans over an area of 746 sq km and has a shoreline of over 640 km, for four months. Migratory birds like common pochard, red-crested pochard, great crested grebe and pond heron can be spotted here during the winter season.

—SUBHENDU BHATTACHARYA







# ALONG THE COAST

Clear blue sky, a warm bright sunny day, silvery sand and the boisterous roar of the mighty Bay of Bengal. With an expansive coastline, Odisha is home to some of the most pristine beaches in the country. These exotic beaches are also the venue for the Indian Surf Festival and the Beach Festival. On one hand is the spiritually significant Chandrabhaga Beach, which is set on the Konark coast and is the hub for a variety of cultural activities. On the other hand is the Gopalpur Beach characterised by soft breeze and its old-world maritime charm. It is here that the lighthouse offers a glimpse into the city's sprawling landscape. Considered to be one of the finest resorts, Gopalpur-On-Sea till date remains an undiscovered haven. Once a bustling sea port, today, it serves

as the ideal abode for those looking for some solitude. However, the latest to steal the limelight in the state is the Blue Flag Certified Puri Beach, or more commonly, the Golden Beach. The certified beach now has a secure and safe, differently-abled friendly bathing zone, pedestrian track, deck chairs, beach huts, proper sanitation and a solid waste management system for a holistic travel experience. Bestowed with a spectacular panorama, the Talasari beach is a fisherman's paradise. Located nearly 10 kilometres from Digha, this lesser-known virgin



beach has sand dunes, calmer waves and is flanked by coconut and cashew trees on each side. Head to the Chandipur coast for a magical experience. It owes its popularity to the 'vanishing sea' phenomenon. One can literally see the sea recede by as much as five kilometres everyday during low tide.



An aerial photograph of a wide beach at sunset. The ocean is a deep blue-grey, with white foam from the waves washing onto the golden sand. The sky is a soft gradient of orange, pink, and purple. In the distance, a small cluster of white tents or structures is visible on the right side of the beach.

# ECO RETREATS IN ODISHA





Odisha's eco retreats are nothing less than a veritable carnival. A celebration of culture, adventure and food, the eco retreats offer travellers an opportunity to explore the state's diverse tourism offerings. After the success of the first edition of Eco Retreats, which was held last year between December 15 and February 15, the Odisha government is all set to organise the second edition during the winters. The tourism department will introduce glamping events at five destinations, namely Konark, Bhitarkanika,

Hirakud, Satkosia and Daringbadi.

The Eco Retreat glamping site at the idyllic Konark Beach, overlooking the Sun Temple continues to leave many spellbound. There are several eco-friendly yet luxurious camps installed in various national parks of the state. The Bhitarkanika National Park, perhaps the most well known of the lot, boasts of quite a few camps. The River Brahmani and Kharasrota meet at Nalitapatia in Bhitarkanika National Park, making the site spellbinding and ideal for glamping adventures.







# LIVING THE ROYAL LIFE

A state with glorious history and myriad wonders, Odisha's tryst with royalty dates back centuries. Nothing encapsulates the state's old-world charm more impeccably than its royal palaces. The 18th-century Belgadia Palace is a fine example of Victorian architecture in the state. Built by Maharaja Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo, the palace today has been converted into a boutique property, inviting guests to take a trip down memory lane.

Established by Raja Ram Chandra Deva in 1590 AD on the bank of the river Kharasrota, the Killa Aul Palace bears stories of Odisha during Afghan, Mughal and British rule. In 2018, a wing of the palace was turned into a heritage hotel, a project initiated by the members of the Aul family.

A pioneer heritage homestay in Odisha,

Dhenkanal Palace is a large complex of apartments, courts, and gardens nestled on the gentle slopes of the Garhjat Hills of the Eastern Ghat. With 13 restored rooms, decked with an eclectic mix of antiques and heritage souvenirs, the property can accommodate upto 24 guests.

Set in the heart of a dense forest, for those looking to relax in the lap of nature, the Gajlaxmi Palace is a great option. One can also make a day-long trip to Parikud Palace, also known as Krushna Prasad Palace, set on an island surrounded by the largest brackish water lake, Chilika on one side and the Bay of Bengal on the other. Even the Kila Dalijoda Palace, tucked away in a remote corner, close to Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, is ideal for those looking for a short weekend getaway.







# THE TASTE OF ODISHA

Odisha always conjures up grand visuals of the Rath Yatra, the Puri Beach, and the holy Jagannath Temple. However, it's the traditional and authentic local cuisine of the region that remains unexplored. Those of you who live for the love of food, Odisha will not disappoint you. From popular seafood offerings like fish curry and crab curry to vegetarian delicacies like ***dalma*** (an assortment of vegetables and spices) to the ever-popular sweet dish ***chhena poda***, your palate will be on an absolute joy ride during your trip to the beautiful state. Don't forget to try some prawns while visiting the Chilika Lake. Another must-try delicacy is the traditional ***pakhala***. Prepared with rice, curd, cucumber, cumin, onions and mint leaves, it's mostly served with dry roasted vegetables. Needless to say, the remarkable flavours and spices of Odia cuisine are a culinary powerhouse.



# EXPERIENCE DESIGN À LA ODISHA

When it came to reimagining tourism in Odisha, we needed to revisit the basic instinct of an explorer. With the natural and cultural diversity that Odisha boasts of, any exercise in synergising destination planning and promotion requires to be founded in clarity of objectives and unbiased assessment of challenges.

At the core of the mission to 'reveal India's best-kept secret' is to enrich the experience, towards which each of our initiatives is oriented.

While our strategic focus on integrated destination development through professionally prepared masterplans progresses with full gusto, our experiments with innovative models such as the Eco Retreat—conceived and executed in a span of 150 days—has brought rich dividends. This model has emerged as our key strategy to get tourists to visit these beautiful destinations set deep in the hinterlands of Odisha.

Guided by a passionate research of tourism possibilities and limitations in the post-COVID era, Odisha Tourism initiated a set of concurrent campaigns to boost regional tourism. The 'Odisha By Road' campaign offers eager travellers diverse itineraries covering the state's length and breadth. It capitalises on the excellent road connectivity between landscapes—beaches, forests, hill—stations, tribal hinterlands, and cities—while offering unique experiences in cuisine, heritage, adventure, ethnic encounters, arts and handicrafts and wildlife.

The most outstanding narrative that this campaign carries was reflected in 2020's World Tourism Day theme—Tourism and Rural Development. Our award-winning model of community-managed ecotourism offers not just India, but the world a template, in safe and sustainable tourism. 47 nature camps across over 19 protected areas and diverse landscapes are managed by trained local community members—a revolution of sorts through which properties at destinations such as Similipal and Satkosia have earned annual revenues of

over INR 1 crore, of which over 80% is retained by the local community.

This initiative comes with the promise of safety, which builds on Odisha's stellar record in tackling the pandemic through inter alia intelligent management of containment zones and measured opening up, further fortified by excellent surge capacity management of institutional healthcare.

We are simply emulating the pragmatic but ambitious vision of our Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik, whose vision is epitomised by transformative projects such as the Blue Flag Certified Golden Beach at Puri, whose turnaround is to be seen to be believed. The leader's vision has been sanctified by Lord Jagannath himself, manifesting through the Puri Transformation Project, which is a textbook transformation of a religious tourism hub.

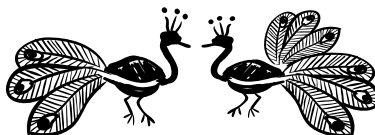
Additionally, a number of new and innovative products are being planned and will be rolled out in phases. Our plans to introduce cruise and houseboat operations in promising locations such as Chilika Lake, Hirakud Reservoir, Bhitarkanika backwaters and viable stretches of River Mahanadi are progressing well.

Most importantly, our policy initiatives are aimed at encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives in homestay operations and offer tourists Odia hospitality up close and personal. Similarly, we are working collaboratively with stakeholders such as families of erstwhile royals to operationalise heritage hotels offering regal experiences in Odia royalty—a facet hitherto unknown.

Experience design is all about transforming existing assets through inclusive innovations, and Odisha Tourism is convincingly mastering this art.

**VISHAL KUMAR DEV, IAS**

*Commissioner-cum-Secretary to Government of Odisha,  
Department of Tourism*





# IN THE FESTIVE SPIRIT

A land of varied cultures and traditions, Odisha is decked in the festive lights throughout the year. From colourful processions to rich customs, the state proudly revels in the festive spirit. Conducted in the first week of December, the **Konark Dance Festival** celebrates the cultural heritage of the region through dance, music and art. The festival not only serves as a platform for classical dancers all across the country to showcase their culture, but is also a tribute to the ancient beauty of the Konark Temple. The **International Sand Art Festival** held at the Chandrabhaga Beach is another crowd puller. Coinciding with the Konark Festival, globally reputed artists are invited to display their sand skills here. Another cultural extravaganza, the **Mukteshwar Dance Festival** celebrates the

beauty of Odissi dance. Held each year between January 14-16 in Bhubaneswar, luminaries like Sujata Mohapatra, Aruna Mohanty, Ratikant Mohapatra, and Madhvi Mudgal have graced the festival till date. For the music lovers, the **Rajarani Music Festival** is a must-visit. The three-day annual festival is set against the backdrop of magnificent temples and pays ode to mellifluous genres of vocals including Hindustani, Carnatic, Sufi and Odissi music. There's also a lot in store for the birding enthusiast as well. In an attempt to promote ecotourism, the **Chilika Bird Festival**, an annual event conducted at Mangalajodi, is organised by the state tourism department. The three-day event this year will be held between January 8 and 10 and will host 10 lakh winged visitors of over 200 species.





# KONARK FESTIVAL

01 - 05 Dec 2020



## INTERNATIONAL SAND ART FESTIVAL

01 - 05 Dec 2020

National  
Chilika Bird Festival  
08 - 10 Jan 2021



## Mukteswar Dance Festival

14 - 16 Jan 2021

Rajarani  
Music Festival  
18 - 20 Jan 2021



## Dhauli-Kalinga Mahotsav

08 - 10 Feb 2021

Vrindaban  
Mahotsav  
28 March 2021



[odishatourism.gov.in](http://odishatourism.gov.in)



**ODISHA**  
INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET.



Discover secrets at every corner





*Discover  
Secrets at every corner*

# Eco Retreat

**ODISHA**

**8<sup>TH</sup> DEC '20 - 28<sup>TH</sup> FEB '21**

Luxurious Stay

Bar & Restaurant

Water Sports

Adventure Activities

Guided Tours

Cultural Evenings



**For Konark, Hirakud, Satkosia, Daringbadi: 1800 891 8118,  
For Bhitarkanika: 78488 38848**

**[ecoretreat.odishatourism.gov.in](http://ecoretreat.odishatourism.gov.in)**

