

ODISHA UNRAVELLED



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A Quarterly Newsletter by Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha



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Sitalasathi, Sambalpur

Picture Courtesy- Abhijit Behera

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*A Newsletter by Department of Tourism,
Government of Odisha*



FOREWORD



 **Smt. Pravati Parida**

*Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for
Women and Child Development, Mission Shakti and Tourism*

Tourism in Odisha is evolving into a powerful expression of our identity, one that seamlessly brings together heritage, nature, culture and community. Over the past months, the State has witnessed a series of meaningful initiatives that reflect this vision, from globally recognised cultural festivals and innovative tourism outreach programmes to strategic policy interventions that strengthen our tourism ecosystem.

Guided by the Odisha Vision 2036 and Vision 2047, our approach to tourism development places equal emphasis on experiential value, sustainability and institutional capacity. In line with this long-term roadmap, the State has taken focused steps to strengthen governance in the tourism

sector, including the induction of 18 Odisha Tourism Service (OTS) cadre officers, aimed at enhancing planning, implementation and service delivery across destinations.

Each initiative highlighted in this edition reflects our commitment to presenting Odisha as a destination of depth and authenticity, while ensuring inclusive growth and sustainable development. As we continue to expand Odisha's presence on national and international platforms, our focus remains on creating memorable experiences for visitors, empowering local communities and preserving the rich cultural and natural legacy that defines our State.

EDITOR'S NOTE



Shri Balwant Singh, IAS

Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Tourism

Odisha's tourism narrative is evolving rapidly, driven by a growing preference among travellers for meaningful, immersive and experience led journeys. Today's visitors seek more than sightseeing, they seek opportunities to engage deeply with the State's culture, heritage, nature and communities, forming emotional connections that last long after their visit ends. In this landscape, festival led tourism and experiential offerings have become central pillars of our strategy, transforming destinations into living spaces of participation, creativity and memorable engagement. The initiatives featured in this edition reflect how Odisha is thoughtfully integrating curated festivals, cultural showcases, nature based experiences and heritage driven programming with broader goals of destination development and institutional strengthening. Whether it is classical arts that celebrate our timeless traditions, vibrant coastal festivals that highlight our maritime identity or nature immersive experiences that spotlight our biodiversity,

each initiative is backed by methodical planning, capacity building, skilled facilitation and strong safety frameworks. This ensures that the experiential journeys we offer are not only enriching but also safe, seamless and professionally delivered. As we expand Odisha's experiential tourism portfolio, our focus remains steadfast on strengthening governance mechanisms, improving service quality and adopting data driven decision making to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth. We are committed to creating systems that empower local communities, enhance visitor satisfaction and uphold the State's reputation for authenticity and excellence. This edition captures the momentum our festival driven and experiential initiatives are generating. Together, they are helping position Odisha as a leading experiential tourism destination, one that delivers long term value to communities, enriches the visitor journey and strengthens the cultural and natural fabric of our State.



BREAKFAST ISLAND



6TH NATIONAL CHILIKA BIRD FESTIVAL

WHERE MIGRATORY WINGS MEET CONSERVATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Each winter, as thousands of migratory birds descend upon the tranquil waters and marshlands of Chilika Lake, Odisha witnesses one of nature's most extraordinary spectacles. Against the breathtaking backdrop of Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, the 6th National Chilika Bird Festival 2026 emerged as a vibrant celebration of biodiversity, conservation, community participation and sustainable tourism. Organised by the Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha, in collaboration with the Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department, the festival brought together ornithologists, wildlife photographers, researchers, birding enthusiasts, students and travel trade representatives from across India and abroad, transforming Chilika into a dynamic platform for ecological dialogue and immersive eco-tourism experiences.

The festival witnessed participation of Foreign Tour Operators and birding experts from Malaysia, Sri Lanka, England, the Netherlands and Taiwan, further strengthening Chilika's positioning on the global birding and eco-tourism map. Through guided boat rides and birdwatching experiences at Mangalajodi and Nalabana Bird Sanctuary, participants experienced close encounters with migratory species including avocets, sandpipers and pintails, while also gaining deeper insights into wetland ecology and conservation practices. The event highlighted Odisha's evolving approach towards integrating responsible tourism with conservation and community participation, particularly through the internationally recognised community-led conservation model at Mangalajodi.

A key attraction of the festival was the Arrival Plaza, which featured curated photo exhibitions showcasing Chilika's biodiversity, craft and cuisine stalls celebrating local culture and livelihoods, and photography equipment display zones that engaged birding and wildlife photography enthusiasts. The festival also included workshops and awareness sessions for local school students and boatmen aimed at strengthening conservation awareness, sustainable tourism practices and long-term environmental stewardship among communities closely associated with the Chilika ecosystem.



The inaugural programme, held at the State Convention Hall, Lok Seva Bhawan, Bhubaneswar, was graced by Smt. Pravati Parida, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Tourism, Women & Child Development and Mission Shakti, Government of Odisha, along with senior government officials, conservation experts and tourism stakeholders. The event also featured the release of conservation-focused publications and films on Chilika Lake and satellite telemetry studies of Greater Flamingos, alongside the signing of an MoU between the State Wildlife Organization and the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM), further strengthening institutional collaboration in the fields of eco-tourism, conservation awareness and sustainable destination management.

The 6th National Chilika Bird Festival once again demonstrated how Odisha is positioning its natural landscapes as immersive tourism destinations rooted in sustainability, biodiversity conservation and authentic community experiences. By integrating ecological awareness with experiential tourism, the festival continues to strengthen Chilika's identity as one of India's foremost eco-tourism destinations.





MANGALAJODI





CHILIKA BOAT RACE

WHERE MIGRATORY WINGS MEET CONSERVATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Long before Chilika became recognised as one of Asia's most celebrated wetlands and birding destinations, the vast lagoon had already shaped the rhythm of life for the fishing communities that lived along its shores. The waters of Chilika have for generations served not only as a source of livelihood, but also as a cultural landscape deeply intertwined with memory, movement and tradition. It was this living relationship between the lake and its people that came alive during the inaugural Chilika Boat Race, organised from 6th to 8th January 2026 at Barkul as part of the 6th National Chilika Bird Festival.

Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, the event transformed the serene waters of Chilika into a vibrant arena of sport, culture and collective celebration. As traditional boats sliced through the shimmering waters beneath expansive winter skies, the race unfolded not merely as a sporting spectacle, but as a powerful expression of community identity, maritime heritage and experiential tourism. The event brought together local fishing communities, tourists, photographers, birding enthusiasts, conservationists and visitors from across the country, creating an atmosphere that blended sporting energy with the stillness and ecological beauty of the lagoon landscape.

Deeply rooted in the traditions of the region, the Chilika Boat Race celebrated the resilience, skill and spirit of the communities whose lives remain intrinsically connected to the lake ecosystem. For generations, navigating the waters of Chilika has demanded instinctive understanding of currents, winds, marsh channels and seasonal changes. The race transformed these everyday practices into a compelling public spectacle, allowing visitors to witness the strength and coordination of traditional boatmen in a setting rarely experienced through conventional tourism narratives.



The event witnessed participation of over 700 players representing fishermen committees from Puri, Khordha and Ganjam districts, making it one of the largest community-led water sporting events organised around the Chilika ecosystem. Teams competed across multiple race segments, drawing enthusiastic crowds along the waterfront and generating strong local participation. The sight of synchronised rowing teams moving across the vast lagoon created moments of both intensity and visual grandeur, reinforcing the race as one of the standout attractions of the Bird Festival.

Yet, what made the event particularly distinctive was the way it seamlessly integrated community participation with Odisha's evolving tourism vision. Unlike commercially curated water sports events, the Chilika Boat Race retained a strong sense of authenticity, remaining rooted in local traditions and community ownership. The initiative reflected Odisha Tourism's broader approach towards promoting immersive, experience-led tourism that celebrates local culture, ecological sensitivity and grassroots participation. By bringing the fishing communities to the centre of the tourism narrative, the race highlighted how local traditions can become meaningful tourism experiences while simultaneously strengthening community pride and cultural preservation.



The event also complemented the broader eco-tourism and conservation-focused engagements curated during the Chilika Bird Festival. Visitors participated in guided boat rides through Mangalajodi and Nalabana Bird Sanctuary, experiencing close encounters with migratory bird species and Chilika's rich wetland biodiversity. The Arrival Plaza at Barkul emerged as a vibrant experiential hub featuring curated photo exhibitions showcasing the lagoon's ecological richness, craft and cuisine stalls celebrating local livelihoods, and photography equipment display zones catering to birding and wildlife photography enthusiasts. Workshops and awareness sessions conducted for local school students and boatmen further reinforced the festival's emphasis on environmental stewardship, sustainable tourism practices and conservation awareness.



Beyond the excitement of competition, the Chilika Boat Race ultimately emerged as a symbolic celebration of Odisha's living maritime traditions and the enduring bond between people and landscape. As boats glided across the tranquil waters against the backdrop of migratory birds and expansive wetlands, the event captured the essence of Chilika not merely as a destination, but as a living ecosystem shaped equally by biodiversity, culture and community. By integrating traditional sporting practices, ecological awareness and experiential tourism, Odisha once again demonstrated how authentic local narratives can be transformed into globally relevant tourism experiences rooted in sustainability, heritage and human connection.



Ensuring smooth execution of the event, extensive operational and safety arrangements were put in place, including deployment of Fire Services personnel, scuba divers, ODRAF teams and police officials. The coordinated arrangements reflected the scale and significance of the initiative, while ensuring safety for participants and visitors throughout the event.





CHILIKA BOAT RACE



2ND GURU PADMASAMBHAVA

A SACRED CONVERGENCE OF SPIRITUALITY, HERITAGE AND GLOBAL BUDDHIST CULTURE

Across the ancient Buddhist landscape of Odisha's Diamond Triangle, where centuries-old monasteries rise quietly amidst rolling hills and weathered stone pathways still echo the memory of monks and pilgrims, the 2nd Guru Padmasambhava Ceremony 2026 unfolded as a profound celebration of spirituality, heritage and cultural continuity. Organised from 11th to 16th January 2026 at Udayagiri, the ceremony brought together revered Buddhist monks, spiritual practitioners, scholars, devotees and international delegates from across the world, reaffirming Odisha's enduring connection with Vajrayana Buddhism and strengthening its growing position on the global Buddhist tourism map.

Organised by the Light of Buddhadharma Foundation International (LBDFI) in collaboration with the Department of Tourism and the Department of Odia Language, Literature & Culture, Government of Odisha, the event commemorated Guru Padmasambhava, the revered Buddhist master credited with the spread of Vajrayana Buddhism across Tibet and the Himalayan region. Set amidst Odisha's ancient monastic complexes and archaeological remains, the ceremony transformed the historic Buddhist sites into vibrant centres of prayer, meditation, learning and spiritual reflection. Monks draped in deep maroon robes moved through centuries-old ruins carrying prayer flags and ceremonial instruments, while chants and meditative recitations filled the serene landscape, creating an atmosphere that felt both timeless and deeply sacred.

The ceremony witnessed participation from nearly 2,000 delegates, practitioners and spiritual seekers representing 22 countries, including Bhutan, Nepal, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Japan, South Korea, Cambodia, the United States and several European nations. The strong international participation reflected the growing global interest in Odisha's Buddhist heritage and highlighted the State's emergence as a significant destination for spiritual and heritage tourism. Beyond religious observances, the event became a platform for global cultural exchange, bringing together Buddhist communities, researchers and heritage practitioners in a shared celebration of faith, philosophy and historical continuity.



One of the most spiritually significant moments of the ceremony unfolded at Lalitgiri with the rare public display of a sacred relic dating back to the 3rd Century BC. Ordinarily preserved under stringent conservation protocols at the ASI Lalitgiri Museum, the relic was ceremonially brought out for public viewing as part of the religious observance, offering devotees an extraordinary opportunity to pay homage. As monks, scholars and pilgrims gathered in reverence before the relic, the atmosphere at Lalitgiri carried a profound sense of devotion and historical resonance. The unveiling of the relic became the spiritual centrepiece of the ceremony, reinforcing Lalitgiri's enduring significance as one of the earliest and most important Buddhist centres in the Indian subcontinent. The initiative was undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India in collaboration with the Department of Tourism and the Department of Odia Language, Literature & Culture, reflecting a collective commitment towards preserving and respectfully presenting Odisha's rich Buddhist heritage.

Adding further intellectual depth to the event was the International Conference on Guru Padmasambhava and the Diamond Triangle, which brought together eminent Buddhist scholars, historians, researchers and spiritual leaders for discussions on Vajrayana Buddhism, Odisha's historical links to Buddhist traditions and the continuing relevance of Buddhist philosophy in the contemporary world. The conference reinforced the importance of Odisha's Buddhist sites not only as archaeological treasures, but also as living centres of spiritual learning and cultural dialogue.

The ceremony also offered immersive heritage experiences for visitors and delegates through guided explorations across Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Lalitgiri. Ancient monasteries, meditation chambers, stupas and intricately carved sculptures provided participants with deeper insight into Odisha's role as a historic centre of Buddhist learning and transnational cultural exchange. The quiet landscapes of the Diamond Triangle, far removed from the rush of modern tourism circuits, allowed visitors to experience spirituality in a setting defined by silence, history and reflection.



Beyond its religious significance, the 2nd Guru Padmasambhava Ceremony reflected Odisha's broader vision of positioning itself as a globally relevant destination for spiritual, heritage and experiential tourism. By integrating sacred rituals, scholarship, heritage conservation and immersive cultural engagement, the event demonstrated how ancient traditions can continue to inspire contemporary tourism experiences rooted in authenticity and meaning.

As prayer chants resonated across the ancient monastic ruins and devotees gathered before the sacred relic in quiet reverence, the 2nd Guru Padmasambhava Ceremony became more than a spiritual gathering. It emerged as a powerful reaffirmation of Odisha's timeless Buddhist legacy and its continuing relevance within the global spiritual and cultural landscape.





UDAYGIRI



IITM Kochi

ODISHA TOURISM SHOWCASES DIVERSE TOURISM EXPERIENCES AT IITM KOCHI 2025

Odisha Tourism marked a vibrant presence at the India International Travel Mart (IITM) Kochi 2025, one of South India's premier travel and tourism exhibitions, organised from 17th to 19th January 2025 in Kochi. The participation served as a strategic platform for promoting Odisha's diverse tourism offerings among travel trade stakeholders, tour operators, industry professionals and travellers from the southern market, while further strengthening the State's positioning as a leading destination for experiential, cultural and sustainable tourism.

The Odisha Tourism pavilion showcased the State's rich portfolio of tourism experiences, including heritage circuits, Buddhist destinations, eco-tourism sites, coastal tourism, wildlife experiences, adventure tourism and immersive cultural offerings. Special emphasis was laid on promoting Odisha's lesser-explored destinations and experiential tourism initiatives that combine nature, heritage, spirituality and community-led engagement. The pavilion attracted significant visitor interest through visually immersive displays, destination branding material and interactive stakeholder engagement activities.

During the three-day event, the Odisha delegation engaged with tour operators, travel agents, destination management companies, hospitality stakeholders and tourism professionals to explore potential collaborations and strengthen business linkages for inbound tourism promotion.

IITM Kochi, brought together tourism boards, hospitality brands, travel companies and industry stakeholders from across the country, creating significant opportunities for destination promotion, market outreach and strategic tourism partnerships. Odisha Tourism's participation at the event aligned with the Department's broader strategy of expanding market visibility and enhancing tourism promotion across key domestic source markets.





Odisha Parab Guwahati

TAKING ODISHA'S CULTURE, TOURISM AND OPPORTUNITIES TO THE NORTHEAST

Organised from 30th January to 1st February 2026, Odisha Parab Guwahati emerged as a vibrant showcase of Odisha's rich cultural heritage, tourism offerings and investment potential in Northeast India. Conceived as a strategic outreach initiative, the event served as a platform to strengthen cultural ties, promote tourism opportunities and foster economic engagement between Odisha and the Northeastern region. Bringing together members of the Odia diaspora, cultural enthusiasts, tourism stakeholders, investors and visitors from across Assam and neighbouring states, the festival celebrated the diverse identity of Odisha while expanding its presence in an important domestic market.

Over three days, the event transformed the Radisson Blu Hotel, Guwahati into a vibrant canvas of Odisha's traditions, art forms and cultural expressions. Visitors experienced captivating performances of Odissi dance, Sambalpuri folk traditions, tribal dances, martial arts and traditional music that reflected the diversity and vibrancy of Odisha's living heritage. Dedicated exhibitions showcasing Odisha's renowned handlooms, handicrafts and artisanal products offered audiences an opportunity to engage with the craftsmanship and cultural legacy that define the State's creative economy.

A major attraction of the festival was the cuisine pavilion, which introduced visitors to Odisha's rich culinary traditions through an array of authentic regional delicacies. The culinary showcase highlighted the diversity of Odia cuisine and reinforced the growing role of gastronomy as an important component of the State's tourism narrative. Alongside cultural and culinary experiences, visitors explored destination showcases and tourism exhibits highlighting Odisha's heritage monuments, eco-tourism destinations, coastal experiences, Buddhist circuits, wildlife attractions and emerging experiential tourism offerings.



One of the key highlights of Odisha Parab Guwahati was the Tourism Roadshow, which brought together tour operators, travel professionals, tourism stakeholders and industry representatives from the Northeast region. The interaction provided a platform to showcase Odisha's evolving tourism landscape and explore opportunities for tourism partnerships, destination promotion and enhanced visitor exchange between the two regions. The roadshow reinforced Odisha's positioning as a destination that offers a unique blend of culture, spirituality, nature and immersive travel experiences.

The event also featured a Diaspora Meet, bringing together members of the Odia community residing across the Northeast. The interaction celebrated the achievements and contributions of the Odia diaspora while strengthening their connection with their cultural roots and encouraging greater participation in Odisha's developmental journey. The gathering served as a meaningful bridge between Odisha and its extended community beyond state boundaries.



Further expanding the scope of engagement, an Investor Meet was organised to showcase Odisha's robust investment ecosystem and emerging opportunities in the tourism sector. Industry leaders, entrepreneurs and business stakeholders participated in discussions focused on exploring collaborations and investment opportunities, highlighting Odisha's growing stature as a progressive and business-friendly destination.



By seamlessly integrating culture, tourism promotion, diaspora engagement and investment outreach, Odisha Parab Guwahati evolved beyond a conventional cultural festival into a comprehensive platform for showcasing the many dimensions of Odisha. The event successfully projected the State as a vibrant destination rooted in heritage yet driven by innovation and opportunity. Through meaningful cultural exchanges, tourism promotion and stakeholder engagement, Odisha Parab Guwahati strengthened Odisha's visibility in the Northeast and reinforced its position as one of India's most diverse, dynamic and culturally enriching destinations.



ODISHA PARAB, GUWAHATI



Launch of Caravan - VGF Mode

LAUNCH OF CARAVAN OPERATIONS UNDER VGF MODE

In a landmark initiative aimed at diversifying tourism experiences and promoting destination-based travel, Odisha Tourism launched Caravan Tourism under the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) model in partnership with Sand Pebbles Tour 'N' Travels. The initiative marked a significant milestone in Odisha's tourism journey, introducing a new category of experiential and mobile tourism designed to offer travellers greater flexibility, comfort and access to some of the State's most scenic and lesser-explored destinations.

Flagged off by Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister Smt. Pravati Parida at Dhauli, Bhubaneswar, the initiative introduced luxury caravans as "homes on wheels," enabling visitors to experience Odisha beyond conventional tourism circuits. Equipped with modern amenities including air-conditioned interiors, sleeping facilities, washrooms, Wi-Fi connectivity, GPS tracking systems and onboard cooking arrangements, the caravans offer a unique blend of comfort and adventure while allowing travellers to immerse themselves in nature and local experiences.

Implemented through a Public-Private Partnership model with Sand Pebbles Tour 'N' Travels as the operating partner, the initiative reflects Odisha Tourism's commitment to fostering innovative tourism products through industry collaboration. The VGF model has been designed to encourage private sector participation while ensuring the viability and long-term sustainability of emerging tourism offerings that have the potential to transform visitor experiences across the State.



The caravan circuits have been strategically curated to connect travellers with Odisha's diverse tourism landscapes, including coastal destinations, wildlife habitats, eco-tourism sites and hill stations. The routes cover destinations such as Talsari, Hirakud-Debrigarh, Similipal, Pentha-Bhitarkanika, Mangalajodi-Chilika, Jiranga-Mahendragiri, Baliput-Satkosia, Daringbadi and Deomali-Putsil-Kolab. By facilitating overnight stays amidst nature and reducing dependence on fixed accommodation infrastructure, the initiative encourages deeper exploration and longer visitor stays across multiple regions.



Beyond enhancing visitor convenience, Caravan Tourism is expected to generate new economic opportunities for local communities, hospitality service providers and tourism entrepreneurs. The initiative supports Odisha Tourism's broader vision of promoting experiential, sustainable and destination-led tourism while creating new avenues for tourism-led economic growth.

The launch of Caravan Tourism represents a forward-looking step towards reimagining travel experiences in Odisha. By combining mobility, comfort and destination discovery, the initiative offers travellers an opportunity to explore the State's natural beauty, cultural richness and hidden gems at their own pace. Through its partnership with Sand Pebbles Tour 'N' Travels, Odisha Tourism has introduced a distinctive tourism product that aligns with evolving traveller preferences and further strengthens the State's position as an innovative and experience-driven tourism destination.





OTM Mumbai

SHOWCASING ODISHA'S EVOLVING TOURISM LANDSCAPE ON A GLOBAL TRAVEL PLATFORM

Odisha Tourism marked a significant presence at OTM Mumbai 2026, one of India's largest and most influential travel trade exhibitions, reinforcing the State's growing positioning as a diverse and immersive tourism destination. Bringing together tourism boards, travel trade stakeholders, hospitality brands, tour operators and destination management companies from across India and overseas, OTM provided Odisha Tourism with a strategic platform to showcase the State's evolving tourism landscape and strengthen engagement with key domestic and international markets.

The Odisha Tourism pavilion emerged as a vibrant representation of the State's rich cultural heritage, natural diversity and tourism offerings. Designed to reflect Odisha's unique blend of heritage, spirituality, eco-tourism and coastal experiences, the pavilion attracted strong visitor interest through immersive destination displays, promotional films, digital showcases and interactive stakeholder engagement. From the iconic Sun Temple at Konark and the serene wetlands of Chilika to the Buddhist Diamond Triangle, Eco Retreat experiences and Odisha's tribal and cultural tourism circuits, the pavilion highlighted the State's diverse tourism portfolio under a unified destination branding narrative.

A key focus of Odisha Tourism's participation at OTM was the promotion of sustainable tourism initiatives that align with evolving traveller preferences for authentic and responsible travel. Special emphasis was laid on eco-tourism destinations, Odisha's rich culinary heritage, heritage circuits, spiritual tourism and adventure tourism offerings, showcasing the State's diverse tourism landscape beyond conventional travel experiences. The showcase reflected the Department's broader strategy of positioning Odisha as a destination where culture, nature, spirituality and community-driven experiences come together to create meaningful and memorable journeys.



The event also served as an important B2B networking platform for tourism stakeholders from Odisha. During the exhibition, the Department engaged extensively with tour operators, travel agents, hospitality stakeholders, destination management companies and tourism professionals to explore collaborative opportunities for tourism promotion and market expansion. Discussions focused on enhancing inbound tourism, developing thematic circuits, promoting niche tourism products and increasing destination visibility across key source markets.

In addition to trade engagement, Odisha Tourism leveraged the platform to strengthen awareness around major tourism events and emerging travel experiences in the State, including Eco Retreat, Chilika Bird Festival, adventure tourism initiatives, Buddhist tourism circuits and coastal tourism experiences. The participation also highlighted Odisha's growing tourism infrastructure, connectivity enhancements and destination development initiatives aimed at creating globally competitive tourism offerings.

OTM Mumbai, recognised as a premier travel trade networking platform, brought together participants from multiple countries and Indian states, creating opportunities for strategic collaborations, destination promotion and tourism market outreach. Odisha Tourism's participation at the event reflected the State's continued efforts to expand its tourism footprint, strengthen industry partnerships and position Odisha as one of India's most compelling destinations for culture-led, nature-based and immersive travel.



SATTE Delhi

BUILDING NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND EXPANDING MARKET REACH

As the global travel industry continues to evolve, destination marketing today is as much about building relationships as it is about showcasing destinations. Odisha Tourism's participation at the South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE) 2026 reflected this approach, positioning the State on one of the region's most influential travel trade platforms while strengthening engagement with key stakeholders across the tourism value chain.

Held in New Delhi, SATTE brought together tourism boards, travel companies, hospitality brands, airlines, tour operators and destination management professionals from across India and overseas. For Odisha Tourism, the event served as a strategic opportunity to engage directly with the travel trade ecosystem, understand emerging market trends and build partnerships that can drive future visitor growth to the State.



Throughout the exhibition, the Odisha delegation held extensive interactions with domestic and international tour operators, travel planners, hospitality stakeholders and tourism professionals. Discussions focused on enhancing destination visibility, promoting Odisha across key source markets and exploring opportunities for integrating the State's tourism products into broader travel itineraries. Particular emphasis was placed on strengthening awareness around Odisha's heritage destinations, wildlife experiences, eco-tourism offerings, spiritual circuits and coastal attractions among industry stakeholders.



SATTE provided an important platform for showcasing Odisha's evolving tourism ecosystem and the State's growing emphasis on sustainable tourism development, destination diversification and visitor-centric experiences. The interactions enabled tourism stakeholders to gain deeper insights into emerging destinations, new tourism products and infrastructure improvements that are contributing to Odisha's transformation as a contemporary travel destination.



Beyond business engagements, the event facilitated valuable exchanges with industry leaders and tourism professionals, helping to identify emerging traveller preferences and market opportunities. Such interactions play a crucial role in informing future tourism promotion strategies and ensuring that Odisha remains aligned with evolving industry dynamics and consumer expectations.

Participation in SATTE forms an important component of Odisha Tourism's broader outreach strategy aimed at strengthening industry partnerships, expanding market access and enhancing destination awareness across domestic and international audiences. By engaging directly with the travel trade community, Odisha continues to build a strong foundation for sustainable tourism growth while reinforcing its position as a destination that offers a unique blend of heritage, nature, spirituality and culture.



As travel demand increasingly shifts towards authentic and meaningful experiences, platforms such as SATTE provide valuable opportunities to connect destinations with the people and organisations that shape travel decisions. Odisha Tourism's presence at SATTE 2026 reaffirmed the State's commitment to strengthening these connections and expanding its footprint in an increasingly competitive global tourism landscape.





Pakhala Paraba

CELEBRATING ODISHA'S CULINARY HERITAGE ON A GLOBAL STAGE

Pakhala Paraba, celebrated annually on 20th March, has evolved into one of Odisha's most significant cultural observances, honouring the State's rich culinary heritage and the enduring legacy of one of its most beloved traditional dishes. More than a food festival, the celebration serves as a tribute to Odisha's agrarian roots, community traditions and distinctive gastronomic identity that has been passed down through generations.

The celebration held at Panthanivas, Bhubaneswar, witnessed the presence of Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Mohan Charan Majhi, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister Smt. Pravati Parida, along with senior Ministers, public representatives and dignitaries. Their participation underscored the importance of preserving and promoting Odisha's unique culinary traditions as an integral part of the State's cultural heritage and tourism identity.

At the heart of the celebration was Pakhala, the traditional fermented rice dish that occupies a special place in Odia households. Served with an assortment of accompaniments such as saga bhaja, badi chura, fried vegetables, fish and curd-based preparations, Pakhala represents a culinary tradition rooted in simplicity, sustainability and local wisdom. Particularly valued during the summer months for its cooling and nutritional properties, the dish continues to remain an integral part of Odisha's food culture.

A defining highlight of the event was Odisha's achievement of a Guinness World Record for the largest serving of Pakhala. A total of 1,174 kilograms of Pakhala was prepared and served, earning international recognition for one of the State's most iconic traditional dishes. The achievement brought global attention to Odisha's culinary heritage and showcased the collective efforts of chefs, hospitality stakeholders, cultural organisations and communities who came together to celebrate and promote the State's gastronomic legacy.



Adding further depth to the celebration, the Institute of Hotel Management (IHM), Bhubaneswar, and the State Institute of Hotel Management (SIHM), Balangir played a significant role in curating and showcasing Odisha's rich culinary traditions. Through specially curated food displays, live demonstrations and traditional culinary presentations, students and faculty highlighted the diversity of Odia cuisine and the cultural narratives associated with regional food practices. Their participation not only enriched the visitor experience but also reinforced the growing importance of culinary education and hospitality institutions in preserving and promoting Odisha's gastronomic heritage.



The event also featured cultural performances, culinary showcases and community participation, transforming the celebration into a vibrant expression of Odisha's cultural identity. By bringing together food, tradition and collective pride, Pakhala Paraba highlighted the growing role of cuisine as an important pillar of cultural tourism and destination promotion.

As interest in culinary tourism continues to grow worldwide, Pakhala Paraba stands as a powerful example of how traditional food can become a medium for storytelling, cultural preservation and global recognition. From a humble household meal to a Guinness World Record holder, Pakhala today represents the warmth, hospitality and cultural richness of Odisha, strengthening the State's position as a destination where heritage and tradition continue to thrive.



ODISHA PARAB AHMEDABAD

ODISHA PARAB AHMEDABAD SHOWCASING ODISHA'S CULTURE, TOURISM AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT IN WESTERN INDIA

Odisha Parab Ahmedabad emerged as a vibrant celebration of Odisha's cultural heritage, tourism potential and economic dynamism, bringing the essence of the State to one of India's most prominent commercial and cultural hubs. Organised as a flagship outreach initiative of the Department of Tourism, the event served as a platform to strengthen cultural connections, promote tourism opportunities and showcase Odisha's evolving growth story to audiences in western India. Bringing together members of the Odia diaspora, cultural enthusiasts, entrepreneurs, investors, tourism stakeholders and visitors from across Gujarat, the festival highlighted the many dimensions of Odisha's identity under a single platform.

Over three days, the venue transformed into a vibrant showcase of Odisha's traditions, creativity and cultural diversity. Visitors experienced captivating performances of Odissi dance, Sambalpuri folk traditions, tribal dance forms, martial arts and traditional music that reflected the richness of Odisha's living heritage. The cultural presentations not only entertained audiences but also provided meaningful insights into the traditions, stories and artistic expressions that have shaped the State's identity over centuries.

The festival featured an extensive exhibition of Odisha's renowned handlooms, handicrafts and artisanal products, drawing significant interest from visitors. Master craftsmen and weavers showcased iconic art forms such as Pattachitra, silver filigree, applique work, stone carving and handwoven textiles, creating opportunities for cultural exchange while promoting Odisha's traditional craft sector. The exhibition underscored the vital role of artisans in preserving and sustaining the State's rich cultural legacy.

The cuisine pavilion emerged as one of the most popular attractions of the festival. Visitors were introduced to Odisha's distinctive culinary traditions through a wide array of authentic regional delicacies and traditional preparations. The culinary showcase highlighted the diversity of Odia cuisine and demonstrated how food serves as an important medium for cultural storytelling, community identity and tourism promotion.



Tourism promotion formed a key pillar of Odisha Parab Ahmedabad. Dedicated destination showcases and tourism exhibits highlighted the State's diverse tourism portfolio, including Puri, Konark, Chilika, Bhitarkanika, Similipal, Hirakud, the Buddhist Diamond Triangle and Odisha's growing eco-tourism and adventure tourism offerings. Through destination films, promotional materials and interactive displays, visitors gained deeper insights into the State's unique blend of culture, spirituality, nature and heritage.



One of the key highlights of the event was the Tourism Roadshow, which brought together tour operators, travel professionals, hospitality stakeholders and tourism industry representatives from Gujarat and neighbouring regions. The interaction provided a platform to showcase Odisha's tourism offerings, strengthen trade partnerships and explore opportunities for greater tourism exchange between the two states. Discussions focused on destination promotion, tourism collaborations and increasing awareness about Odisha among prospective travellers and industry stakeholders.



The event also featured a Diaspora Meet that brought together members of the Odia community residing across Gujarat. The interaction celebrated the achievements and contributions of the diaspora while strengthening their connection with their cultural roots. It provided a meaningful platform for engagement and encouraged greater participation of the Odia community in promoting Odisha's culture, tourism and development journey.



Further expanding the scope of engagement, an Investor Meet was organised to showcase Odisha's progressive industrial ecosystem, business-friendly policies and emerging investment opportunities. Industry leaders, entrepreneurs and business stakeholders participated in discussions focused on exploring collaborations across the tourism sector, highlighting Odisha's growing stature as a preferred investment destination.



A distinctive feature of Odisha Parab Ahmedabad was the collaborative participation of multiple departments and agencies of the Government of Odisha. Beyond tourism promotion, the event showcased the State's achievements across sectors including industry, handlooms and handicrafts, culture, rural development and entrepreneurship. This integrated approach enabled visitors and stakeholders to gain a comprehensive understanding of Odisha's development trajectory and the opportunities emerging across various sectors.



The festival also provided a valuable platform for entrepreneurs, start-ups, self-help groups, artisans and business enterprises from Odisha to showcase their products, innovations and success stories before a wider audience. Through dedicated exhibitions, business interactions and networking opportunities, participants were able to engage with potential buyers, investors and collaborators, strengthening market linkages and expanding business visibility beyond the State. Their participation highlighted Odisha's growing entrepreneurial ecosystem and demonstrated how traditional knowledge, innovation and enterprise are contributing to inclusive economic growth.



By seamlessly integrating culture, tourism, entrepreneurship, diaspora engagement and investment promotion, Odisha Parab Ahmedabad evolved beyond a conventional cultural festival into a comprehensive platform for showcasing the many facets of Odisha. The event successfully projected the State as a destination rooted in heritage yet driven by innovation, opportunity and sustainable growth. Through meaningful cultural exchanges and strategic stakeholder engagement, Odisha Parab Ahmedabad strengthened Odisha's visibility in western India and reinforced its position as a culturally vibrant, economically progressive and future-ready state.



ODISHA PARAB, AHMEDABAD





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