

ODISHA UNRAVELLED



ODISHA
INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET.

OCTOBER 2021 | ISSUE 09

Quarterly Newsletter by Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha



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World Tourism Day 2021

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Odishaaah!



Hirakud Reservoir , Sambalpur

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Quarterly Newsletter by Department of Tourism,
Government of Odisha



FOREWORD



 **JYOTI PRAKASH PANIGRAHI**
*Minister of State (IC) for Tourism and
Odia Language, Literature & Culture*

Tourism is a recognised pillar for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The very essence of tourism and its future depends not only on the protection of natural, cultural and historical resources, but also on sustainable development of the sector that ensures creation of equitable opportunities for tourism stakeholders.

Inclusive growth though Tourism is a mantra adopted by Government of Odisha since the past few years. Community-managed nature camps, training of local youths as guides to assist tourists, schemes to enable establishment of homestays, upgradation of

traditional boats to FRP for boatmen, etc., are some of the many initiatives to augment livelihood development of local communities. Looking at the pandemic-induced travel pattern, Department of Tourism is also taking proactive steps to launch Caravan Tourism and enable travellers to explore Odisha by Road.

From developing Odisha's tourism and hospitality sector for greater resilience against disruptive events such as cyclones and pandemics, to ensuring responsible design of new tourism products, Department of Tourism is leaving no stones unturned to offer travellers a sustainable tourism ecosystem.

EDITOR'S NOTE



 SURENDRA KUMAR, IAS
Principal Secretary, Tourism, GA and PG

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a massive social and economic impact, with tourism sector being the worst-hit across the globe. Despite the adversity, Odisha Tourism is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient tourism economy through integrated sustainable development and promotion of the sector.

Taking cue from travel community's shift from mass tourism, we are actively working on introducing niche products with immersive tourism experiences. Development of culinary tourism through Nimantran chain of restaurants, creation of shore-infra to enable cruise tourism in various waterbodies, ramping up of ecotour properties

to host travellers interested in eco-tourism, creation of water sports and adventure tourism products are some of the many initiatives on which Department of Tourism is working proactively.

Simultaneously, sustainable development of infrastructure via integrated master planning of identified tourist destinations is being carried out. Work has been initiated for development of Nrusinghanath and Harishankar temples on Gandhamardhan Hills based on masterplan approved by Hon'ble Chief Minister. Similarly, master planning for Chilika, Hiraakud, Satkosia and Bhitarkanika is being carried out with an aim to improve visitor experience, promote natural ecosystem and adventure tourism.

CHIEF MINISTER INAUGURATES LIGHT AND SOUND SHOW AT SAMALESWARI TEMPLE

A Visual Story telling of Western Odisha's rich tradition, culture & history



Odisha boasts of a glorious history with its magnificent monuments standing testament to the cultural lineage spanning over 2000 years. A major contribution to the State's radiant history, diverse dialects, vibrant folk music and dance forms comes from Western Odisha, with Sambalpur's Maa Samaleswari Temple acting as a pivot for socio-cultural activities.

With an objective to promote cultural and heritage imprints of western Odisha, Department

of Tourism has operationalised 'Light & Sound Show' at the 16th century shrine with an investment of INR 7.48 crore. Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the project on 11 September 2021.

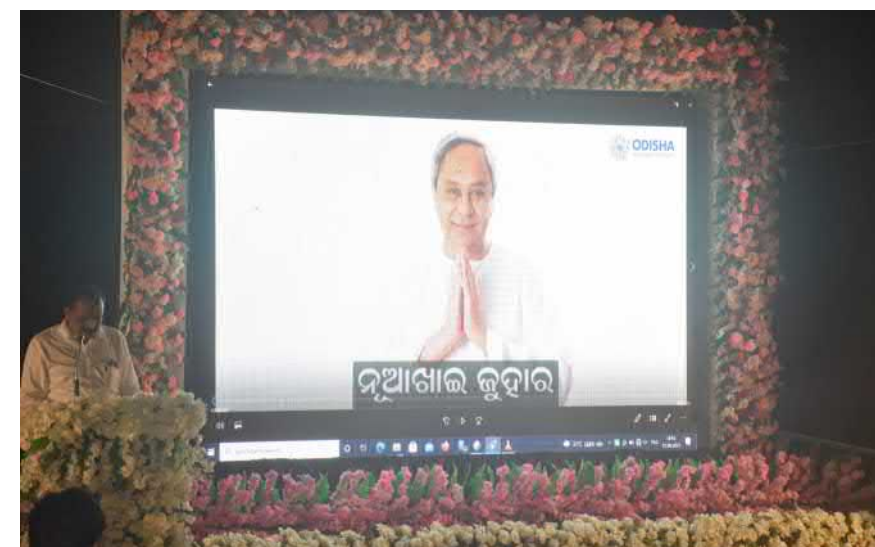
Inaugurating the project on the auspicious occasion of Nukhai through virtual mode, Shri Naveen Patnaik said, "Through this state-of-the-art Light and Sound Show, western Odisha's rich tradition, culture and history will be showcased in the form of visual story

telling through effective use of modern light and sound technology. I am sure the travel itineraries of people visiting Western Odisha will now feature



Maa Samaleswari Temple as a must-visit tourist destination."

The key project components include the light & sound show infrastructure, story visualization along with the installation of a 100 KVA substation. Featuring poetry by Padma Shri Haladhar Nag composed using background music scored by Western Odisha's eminent musician Shri Pankaj Jal, the script for the 36 minute duration show has been prepared in three languages – Hindi, Odia and English, basis the data provided by the Department of History, Sambalpur University.



ODISHA'S NIMANTRAN FOR FOODIES TO EXPLORE ODIA CUISINE

Bhubaneswar Restaurant inaugurated on OTDC's 42nd Foundation Day



Food and travel are complementary to each other. Dining out is an important part of travel and ranks alongside a destination's attractive scenery and accommodation facilities. With a view to encourage culinary tourism in the state, Odisha Tourism has introduced NIMANTRAN, a chain of fine dine restaurants to promote the State's authentic culinary spread and diversity. The restaurant at Bhubaneswar, located near Rama Devi Women's University, was launched on 3 September 2021.

Inaugurating the restaurant in Bhubaneswar on OTDC's 42nd foundation day, Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik said, "A taste of local cuisine helps travellers get a sense of the place in a more immersive way. With a view to enable travellers in experiencing

Odisha's diverse culture through food, Odisha Tourism's flagship initiative Nimantran will promote culinary tourism in the State."

Managed by OTDC, the restaurant's menu has been crafted to provide the best of Odia appetizers, main courses, refreshments and desserts in an aesthetically pleasing setting with interiors having Odisha's art, craft and heritage on subtle display.

"Odisha being an agrarian state, the concept of farm to table forms the basis of many flavourful dishes that depicts versatility, especially because of the ingredients and cooking methods that are specific to different regions of the State. We aim to introduce such region-specific authentic dishes via a fine dine experience through Nimantran", said Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, Minister

for Tourism and OLLC.

A Poda Pitha, prepared in the shape of Odisha and weighing approximately one quintal, was presented to guests attending the inaugural ceremony along with a buffet dinner featuring the State's diverse culinary spread.

OTDC Chairperson Smt. Shree-mayee Mishra, Principal Secretary Tourism Shri Surendra Kumar and Director Tourism Shri Sachin R. Jadhav were present during the occasion.

Apart from Bhubaneswar, work is under progress to launch Nimantran overlooking the Blue Flag Beach in Puri. In Sambalpur, Rani Bakhri, a 17th century historical palace located near Samaleswari Temple, is being renovated, where diners will get to experience Odisha's royal heritage along with authentic Odia cuisine.



TOURISM FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH – REFLECTIONS & WAY FORWARD

Odisha Tourism hosts Webinar for World Tourism Day Celebrations



United Nations has designated 27 September each year as World Tourism Day (WTD), a day of global observance to foster awareness of tourism's social, cultural, political, and economic value and the contribution that the sector can make towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.

Odisha Tourism Department celebrates World Tourism Day every year by organizing various events at the state level as well as at the district level. In view of a call for Bharat Bandh on this 27 September by several political parties and associations, Department of Tourism has decided to organize the WTD 2021 celebrations entirely in virtual mode. In tandem with this year's theme chosen by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Odisha Tourism held a webinar on Tourism for Inclusive Growth – Reflections & Way Forward. The online event witnessed participation from prominent speakers deliberating on numerous initiatives taken by Odisha Government for development of Tourism sector.

that's self-sustainable, boosts local entrepreneurship, augments livelihood growth while ensuring services offered to tourists that conforms to global standards.

Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik sent a purposeful message which was read out during the webinar by Director Tourism Shri Sachin Ramchandra Jadhav. He quoted, "Sustainable and responsible tourism is intrinsic to Odisha. Our key offerings are community oriented. Odisha's award-winning ecotourism initiative of community managed nature camps exemplifies this model in letter and spirit. We have also introduced the Odisha Homestay Establishment Scheme 2021 to enable creation of immersive tourism experiences through operationalization of homestays at unexplored bio-diverse destinations with rich culture while boosting local entrepreneurship and augmenting rural livelihoods."

Underlining the tremendous potential of tourism in the

state, Tourism Minister Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi said, "We have unique landscape, vibrant culture and heritage sites in our State. Odisha Government has re-worked the strategy and vision for Tourism in the post covid environment while ensuring that safety is the priority."

Further, the minister also emphasized on Caravan Tourism and mentioned that the State is taking all measures for creation of basic infrastructure required to facilitate operationalisation of caravans.



"Odisha Government has created an investor-friendly climate. Surveys of investible tourism landbank is being carried out to develop both existing and unexplored tourism destinations. Private sector investments are being facilitated through attractive incentivization schemes."

SHRI SURENDRA KUMAR, IAS
Principal Secretary, Tourism

Speaking on the State's efforts towards inclusive growth in tourism he added that Odisha has developed a lot of eco-tourism sites both by the Department of Tourism and the Department of Forest, Environment & Climate Change that are being managed by local communities.



WORLD TOURISM DAY 2021 | **TOURISM FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH**



UNWTO Director of Technical Cooperation & Silk Road Development Shri Suman Billa shed light on Odisha's far-reaching initiatives to create 'Inclusive Tourism'. He touched upon schemes that aid Homestay establishments, upgradation of traditional boats to FRP to aid local boatmen and Department's support to traditional industry handloom and handicrafts that boosts creation of livelihoods through tourism.

CMD, Swosti Group Shri JK Mohanty, Founder and Director Operations of Green Dot Expeditions Capt Suresh Sharma, Executive Chairman & Managing Director of Kamat Hotels Group Ltd. Dr. Vithal Venkatesh Kamat, and Avid Traveler and Biker Shri Devjyoti Patnaik also shared their perspectives on the tourism potential in the state.



A second TV commercial on 'Odisha by Road', a campaign initiated last year on World Tourism Day to promote road trips in Odisha was launched during the webinar.

Shortlisted photographs from World Tourism Day 2021 Photography contest 'Odisha Through Your Lens' exhibited at Esplanade Mall and Utkal Galleria in Bhubaneswar on 26th and 27th September 2021.





2nd Place Photographer : **Satyajit Das** Location : **Bhitarkanika National Park**



ODISHA THROUGH YOUR LENS

Odisha Tourism conducted its annual photography contest Odisha Through Your Lens from 2 September 2021 to 15 September 2021. The contest received more than 700 photo entries portraying the beauty and diversity of the State. A Jury, comprising of eminent photographers and nature enthusiasts, shortlisted 100 photographs. Out of these photos, top three were announced winners during the World Tourism Day Webinar organised by Odisha Tourism on 27 September 2021. The winners will receive exciting tour packages and gift vouchers from OTDC to explore and experience the best of Odisha.

1st Place

Photographer : **Satyam Bhuyan**
Location : **Chilika**

2nd Place

Photographer : **Satyajit Das**
Location : **Bhitarkanika National Park**

3rd Place

Photographer : **Mousam Pattnaik**
Location : **Sambalpur**



3rd Place Photographer : **Mousam Pattnaik** Location : **Sambalpur**



NUAKHAI BHETGHAT CELEBRATION LIVENS UP THE FESTIVE SPIRIT DURING PANDEMIC



Odisha is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and agriculture is embedded in the State's ecosystem – be it fuelling the State's economy or generating livelihood. Being an agrarian State, it is but natural that Odisha has numerous festivals celebrating agriculture and Mother Earth, prime among them being Nuakhai – celebrated with much fanfare in Western Odisha.

Nuakhai being a social festival that sees friends and relatives come together did not see much fanfare last year due to the pandemic. Looking at the restrictions imposed due to the second wave of Covid-19, the celebrations this year also turned low key for the people. To keep up the festive spirit during the pandemic, Department of Tourism and Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) organized Nuakhai Bhetghat in association with Odisha Mining Corporation and Odia Language Literature & Culture Department on 29 August 2021.

With strict adherence to Covid safety protocols, various folk dance and musical performances were organized at Lemon Tree Hotel in Bhubaneswar that showcased the beauty and culture of Western Odisha. Since the event was not open to public, it was telecast on an Odia TV channel on 11 September 2021, marking the occasion of Nuakhai.

Eminent personalities of the region were invited and felicitated during the event. A special video tribute was paid to legendary actor and theatre artist Shri Atal Bihari Panda for his invaluable contribution to the Odia Film Industry through his National Award-winning Film Sala Budha. A delicious culinary spread comprising the best of Western Odisha's cuisines was also organized for the guests to partake from.

The event was attended by Language, Literature and Culture Minister Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, OTDC Chairperson Smt. Shreemayee Mishra, Com-

merce and Transport Minister Shri Padmanabha Behera, MP Shri Prasana Acharya, MLA Shri Kishore Chandra Mohanty, Western Odisha Development Council (WODC) Chairperson Shri Asit Kumar Tripathy, Development Commissioner Cum additional Chief Secretary Shri PK Jena, Principal Secretary Tourism Shri Surendra Kumar, Commissioner Cum Secretary Culture Department Shri Suresh Chandra Dalei, Director Tourism Shri Sachin R Jadhav, Culture Director Shri Ranjan Kumar Das, Advisor Mission Shakti Smt. Lopamudra Baxipatra, State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities Smt. Sulochana Das, Odisha Small Industry Corporation Chairman Shri Chinmay Kumar Sahoo, Odisha Film Development Corporation (OFDC) Chairman Shri Kuna Tripathy, Odisha Hockey Promotion Council Chairman Shri Dilip Tirkey, Film Director Shri Sabyasachi Mohapatra, Actor Shri Manoj Mishra, Shri Ratan Meher and Shri Bharat Gourav Das among others.





COVID NEGATIVE SERVITORS PULL CHARIOTS OF THE HOLY TRINITY

*Ratha Jatra held sans
devotees for the second time*

Ratha Jatra, one of the biggest religious events in the country, was held only in Puri sans devotees for the second consecutive year in view of the prevailing pandemic. Pulled by covid negative servitors, the three divine chariots of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra rolled on the Grand road on 12 July 2021

formed on time as per the schedule fixed by Shree Jagannath Temple Association (SJTA) and then the servitors and police personnel pulled the chariots on the Grand road amid chanting of hymns, blowing of conches and beating of gongs and cymbals.

The trinity and their chariots stayed at Maa Gundicha Temple for 8 days where necessary rituals were followed. On the 9th day, the Trinity embarked on their return journey to Sri Mandira with the chariots being pulled by the temple servitors and policemen.

As per the guidelines laid down by the State Government, a total of 500 people comprising temple servitors and police personnel who underwent RT PCR test and reported negative, were allowed to pull the chariots. All the rituals were per-



PC: Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA)

EXPLORE ODISHA BY ROAD

In the age of social distancing, embark on an unforgettable road trip adventure



With the Covid cases on decline, the horizon is starting to look brighter for avid travellers. The travel and tourism sector has started jumping back on its feet with people hitting the road again. For those avoiding public transport, road trips are beckoning travellers to embark on an immersive journey on roads less travelled. Odisha has some exciting tourism circuits to travel. With its undulating topography culminating in hill ranges with its bountiful forests on one side and the sea on the other, Nature has been generous to the eastern State. Throw in some heritage, history and adventure, and you are sure to have an experience of a lifetime.

DEEP INTO THE MANGROVES

Bhitarkanika via Bichitrapur Sanctuary and Chandipur is for those who wish to explore the mangroves. Set out in your cars and cover primary destinations such as Chandipur Beach, Bichitrapur Mangrove Sanctuary, Aul Palace, Talasari Beach, and Bhitarkanika National Park along the route. Bichitrapur comprises a large stretch of mangrove forest. This place is close to where river Subarnarekha, travelling all the way from Jharkhand, meets the Bay of Bengal. The mangrove plantations on either side make for an interesting frame to capture. Hop into the six or eight-seater boat and take a ride into the creek. Sometimes local fishing boats or ferries navigating through the creek may grab your attention while the diversity of birds may command you at other times.

TIGER TRAILS AND ROYALTY

A road circuit that entails Similipal Tiger Reserve and Baripada covers Similipal Tiger Reserve, Belgadia Palace, Barehipani and the Nawana Valley, Sitakund Waterfall and also the Ecotourism nature camps. This is ideal for those who are passionate about wildlife as well as history buffs since this itinerary packs in the best of both worlds. While the reserve harbours tiger, leopard, sloth bear, elephant, gaur and other species, it is home some of the unique melanistic tiger in the world. While there do not miss Joranda Falls and Barehipani Falls. To give your tour a royal touch, do go over to the sprawling Belgadia Palace!

THE QUEST FOR ODISHA'S WILD WEST

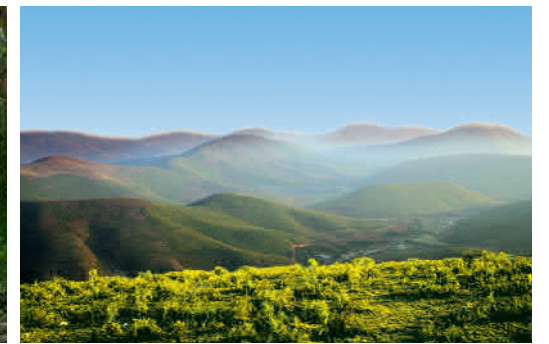
Explore your wild side by going on adrenaline-packed jungle safaris at the Debrigarh and Satkosia wildlife sanctuaries and take scenic treks along the Gandhamardan Hills. Try some exhilarating adventure sports at Hirakud Reservoir or reawaken your spiritual side at the Patali Srikhetra, Harishankar – Nrusinghanath, Chausath Yogini, and Indralath temples.

CRUISING ALONG THE CIRCARS

The Chilika-Gopalpur circuit gives travellers the opportunity to visit the largest brackish water lake with estuarine character that sprawls along the east coast of India. Considered to be the largest lagoon in India, it is also counted amongst the largest lagoons in the world. If you are lucky, you may even catch a glimpse of the endangered Irrawaddy dolphins during your boat ride in Chilika Lake. Throw in Gandahati waterfall, Taptapani hot springs, Jirang Monastery and Taratarini Temple and you would have absolutely no reason to complain.

THE ULTIMATE MONSOON ESCAPE

Take a road trip during the monsoons to watch Odisha's natural beauty come alive. Drive down to tourist spots on Deomali Hills; trek to the Gulmi and Duduma waterfalls; and pay your respects at the holy Gupteswar Cave. Stop by the tribal museum or interact with locals in the tribal villages of Dhuruba and Gadaba and the Kotpad village to learn more about Odisha's rich



textile history. If you're around on a Thursday, don't forget to visit the weekly Bonda Market at Onukadelli for some beautiful souvenirs.

REACHING FOR THE HILLS

This itinerary is made to quench the thirst of adventure in you. Visit the Hanging Bridge at Chekaguda before setting off on a drive through the verdant hills, valleys, and jungles of Chatikona. Explore the pine forests at Odisha's serene hill station of Daringbadi and hike through its coffee plantations before exploring the Dasingbadi waterfalls, or visit the Butterfly and Hill View parks. Then take your adventurous self to Mandasaru—a rich ecosystem boasting of rare medicinal plants and animal species. Then move towards the beach of Gopalpur-on-Sea straight from the hills to experience the high of exciting watersports.

THE CASCADE TRAIL

This road trip is tailor-made for the nature lovers. From the picturesque waterfalls of Bhimkund—believed to be the location where the Pandavas stayed during their many expeditions—to the twin waterfalls of Sanaghagara and Badaghagara and onto to the incredible Sitabinji Fresco Painting and Rock Inscription and the picturesque Kanjipani Ghati, this itinerary throws up surprises at every corner.

Odisha is a treasure trove of many unforgettable experiences. The best way to experience its diverse offerings is not only going on road trips but also ensuring you follow all safety protocols. Remember to pay thorough attention to hygiene and plan pit stops for fuel, food, rest and stay before you set out. Throw in extra masks and bottles of sanitisers and you are good to go!

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Love to blog about interesting places and unseen destinations?
Here's your chance to get featured with us.

CREATING ROADMAP FOR RECOVERY

Odisha Tourism partners with FICCI for second edition of Travel, Tourism & Hospitality e-conclave



The second wave of Covid-19 badly impacted the travel, tourism and hospitality sector but the stakeholders showed great resilience against the pandemic, welcomed the measures taken by the State Government and ensured strict adherence of safety guidelines and protocols to limit the virus spread. To highlight the initiatives and share meaningful dialogues with the stakeholders, policymakers, industry leaders and representatives of other state governments, Odisha Tourism partnered with FICCI in their second virtual edition of Travel, Tourism & Hospitality **E Conclave: The Road to Recovery & Resilience on 5 August 2021.**

The key sessions and discussion points revolved around

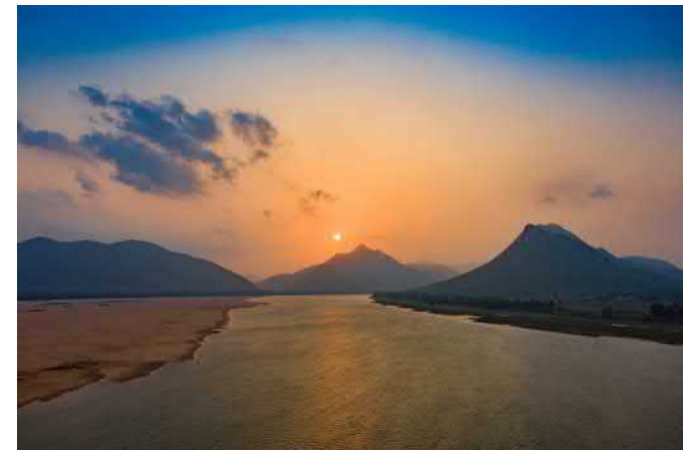
the best ways to counter the crisis and ensure quick revival of tourism industry. Highlighting that domestic tourism is important for quick sector revival, Tourism Minister Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi in his address during the valedictory session said, "The projects we are currently working on will help revive the tourism sector through the domestic tourism market. To further make the sector future-proof while improving livelihood of local communities, we have drafted the Odisha Tourism (development, facilitation and regulation) Bill that'll empower the Government to register service providers, regulate activity in tourist areas, facilitate bona fide investment proposals and ensure tourist safety against malpractices."

He also touched upon various steps taken for destination development through master planning of tourism sites and surrounding areas like Nrusinghanath – Harishankar, Hirakud, Samaleswari Temple, etc. with an aim to highlight the sites as major tourist destinations while ensuring creation of livelihood opportunities for the local communities.

The session was attended by Ms. Sushri Usha Thakur, Minister of Tourism, Culture & Adhyatm, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Vasanthai Ahir, Minister of Tourism, Govt. of Gujarat, Shri Tamradhwaj Sahu, Minister of Gruha, Loka Nirman, Jail, Tourism, Home, Public Works, Dharmasv, Govt. of Chattisgarh

MASTER PLANS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Masterplan for Harishankar Peetha inaugurated by Hon'ble Chief Minister



Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries and is closely associated with social, economic and environmental well-being of destinations. The World Tourism Organisation defines sustainable tourism as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities".

Taking this into account, Odisha Tourism is actively working towards sustainable tourism development of identified tour-

ist destinations. Nrusinghanath-Harishankar is one such tourism destination that has been taken up for integrated tourism master planning and development as a religious and adventure tourism spot. Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik recently laid the foundation stone for Harishankar Peetha during his visit to Bolangir on 22 September 2021.

A master planning agency identified by Department of Tourism has prepared the masterplan for Nrusinghanath-Harishankar temple premises at the foothills of Gandhamardan hill lying be-

tween 2 districts – Balangir and Bargarh. The components of the masterplan include inter-connectivity between temples through hilltop, beautification of the location including illumination, restoration, creation of promenade, public park, plaza, waterfall development etc., creation of amenities like a visitor facility, vending zone, café, toilets, benches, resting areas, parking zone and other temporary facilities for pilgrims during festivals. Similarly, agencies have been identified to create masterplans for developing destinations like Hirakud, Chilika, Satkosia and Bhitarkanika.

ODISHA IN FOCUS



Foundation for Environment Education in Denmark (FEE) recertified the Golden Beach in Puri with Blue Flag status along with seven other beaches in India on 21 September 2021.



Iconic Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar named as the venue for upcoming Hockey Men's Junior World Cup 2021 slated to be held from 24 November 2021 to 5 December 2021.



Odisha hosted the Olympics contingent of Women's and Men's Hockey teams that scripted history at Tokyo 2020. Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik felicitated Hockey Olympians on 11 August 2021



Odisha's Pramod Bhagat, winner of country's first ever Gold medal in Badminton at Tokyo Paralympics, felicitated by Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik on 10 September 2021.



Odisha Tourism participates in the 16th edition of HICSA

The 16th edition of Hotel Investment Conference – South Asia (HICSA) was held at New Delhi on 28 and 29 September 2021 with Odisha Tourism as the event partner. Prominent hospitality industry stakeholders from across the country participated in the event. Highlighting the State Government's initiatives towards making the sector socially and economically sustainable, Tourism Minister Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi welcomed the investors to partner with Odisha in making the sector future-proof.

NEW NATURE CAMPS POP UP



Tensa Nature Camp

A community managed sustainable Tensa Nature Camp in the Bonai Forest Division is a new addition to the ecotourism initiative of Odisha Forest Department. Tensa, referred to as the hill station of Sundargarh, is known for its luxuriant forests and ecological diversity. Six well-furnished Eco-cottages are available for visitors at the nature camp.



Patora Nature Camp

Surrounded by lush green forests of Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary and the water reservoir Patora Dam in Nuapada district, the Patora Jungle cottages is another addition to nature camps in Odisha. It consists of one cottage and four swiss tent accommodations for visitors. The camps are managed by local community. Activities like cycling, boating and birdwatching are available for tourists at the nature camp.



HERITAGE WALK IN PURI EVERY SUNDAY

A walk to create awareness among school children



The cultural heritage of Puri beckons travelers from far and wide. Dotted with century old heritage sites, the pilgrim town is a specimen of ancient cultures. To preserve, promote and propagate the rich legacy of this heritage town, it is imperative for the young generation to be aware of its glorious history. With an aim to educate school children on the importance of heritage sites in the holy town, the district administration and Odisha Eco-tourism Foundation initiated a heritage walk-and-ride programme.

Every Sunday, a group of 40 children from government schools will be part of this programme and tour the heritage sites with guides and volunteers. A quiz contest would

also be organised at the end of the walk where winners will be rewarded. Collector Samarth Verma inaugurated the first heritage walk on 5 September 2021. Students of Government Girls' High School and Biswamber Vidyapith accompanied by experts Dr Surendra Mishra and Sidharth Acharya were given a tour of Kabir, Vidur, Bauli and Sankaracharya mutts besides Kadar ashram. The students also got an opportunity to interact with Shankaracharya Swamy Nischalanda Saraswati.

A heritage ride for senior citizens has also begun from 28 September 2021.



The open grasslands along the foothills of Eastern Ghats are home to some of the exceptional species of deer in Odisha - the Blackbucks. Locally known as Krushnasara which means Antelope of Lord Krishna or Kala Baudia which translates to Cloudy Black are revered in the area. They roam freely in the paddy fields surrounding the villages of Bhetanai, symbolizing an exemplary form of Man-Animal harmonious relationship. The local community protects these animals religiously and do not harm them even if they destroy their crops.

Mr. Moharana is one such local who has dedicated his life to conservation of Blackbucks in Bhetanai since 1998. "According to folklore, when the great famine of 1866 plagued the community, many people started leaving the area looking for

work in towns. A herd of Blackbucks, after losing their habitat, made the grasslands their home. Coinciding with their arrival, the rain gods smiled on Bhetanai, bringing the much-needed relief for the villagers. While grazing, they fertilized the grassland that resulted in bountiful harvest. Since then the Villagers started revering and protecting these wonderful animals as their own", he says. Mr. Moharana currently runs a home stay called Maitry in this area.

Bhetanai is 170 KM from Bhubaneswar and the nearest railway station is Balugaon - 70 Km from Bhetanai

One can stay at BlackBuck Nature camp (ecotourodisa.com) to see these beautiful antelopes.



*Subhendu Bhattachary,
Naturalist from Odisha*

EXPLORING ODISHA BY ROAD SINCE 2018



DHIRENDRASINGH
RAJPUROHIT



For travel enthusiasts more than a destination, it's the journey that enthralls. When we talk about routes, the road infrastructure plays a major role in making the journey a memorable one.

As a traveller, my road trips made me realise that Odisha is truly 'India's Best Kept Secret'.

I shifted to Odisha in 2018 from Mumbai for my new job in the city. Traveling and exploring new places has been my passion, however I was skeptical about traveling here. I still remember my first road trip from Bhubaneswar to Puri and the marine drive ride which cleared all the misconceptions and motivated me to explore Odisha by road.

In July 2018, I went on my second road trip to Keonjhar that worked as an ice breaker and gave me a hint that Odisha is a hidden gem which I

need to explore. The Karanjia ghati (Kanjipani Ghati) and Anandapur-Karanjia road was something I never expected in Odisha. The road that leads to Bhimkund falls from Keonjhar to Khandadhar falls mesmerizes travellers with its beauty.

The experience of Keonjhar inspired me to take a trip every weekend to explore different districts. Since

then, I have explored many known and unknown places.

The roads in Odisha lead you to nearby seashore, lush green vegetation, meadows, dense jungles, greenfields and villages among others, giving varied experiences. Except for snow and desert, you will get to see every possible beautiful terrain in the state. Each ride to an unexplored place in Od-



isha gave me the best feeling compared to the previous ride. Moreover, most of the tourist destinations or the main attractions of the area are easily approachable by roads.

Now, Mahendragiri is getting popular among travellers and bikers, whereas I explored the place in 2018. Back then hardly anyone used to travel there. The ride towards Mahendragiri amidst the most beautiful ghat road via Jirang was one of the best experiences. My social media post on the Mahendragiri road trip became an instant hit among the bikers that year.

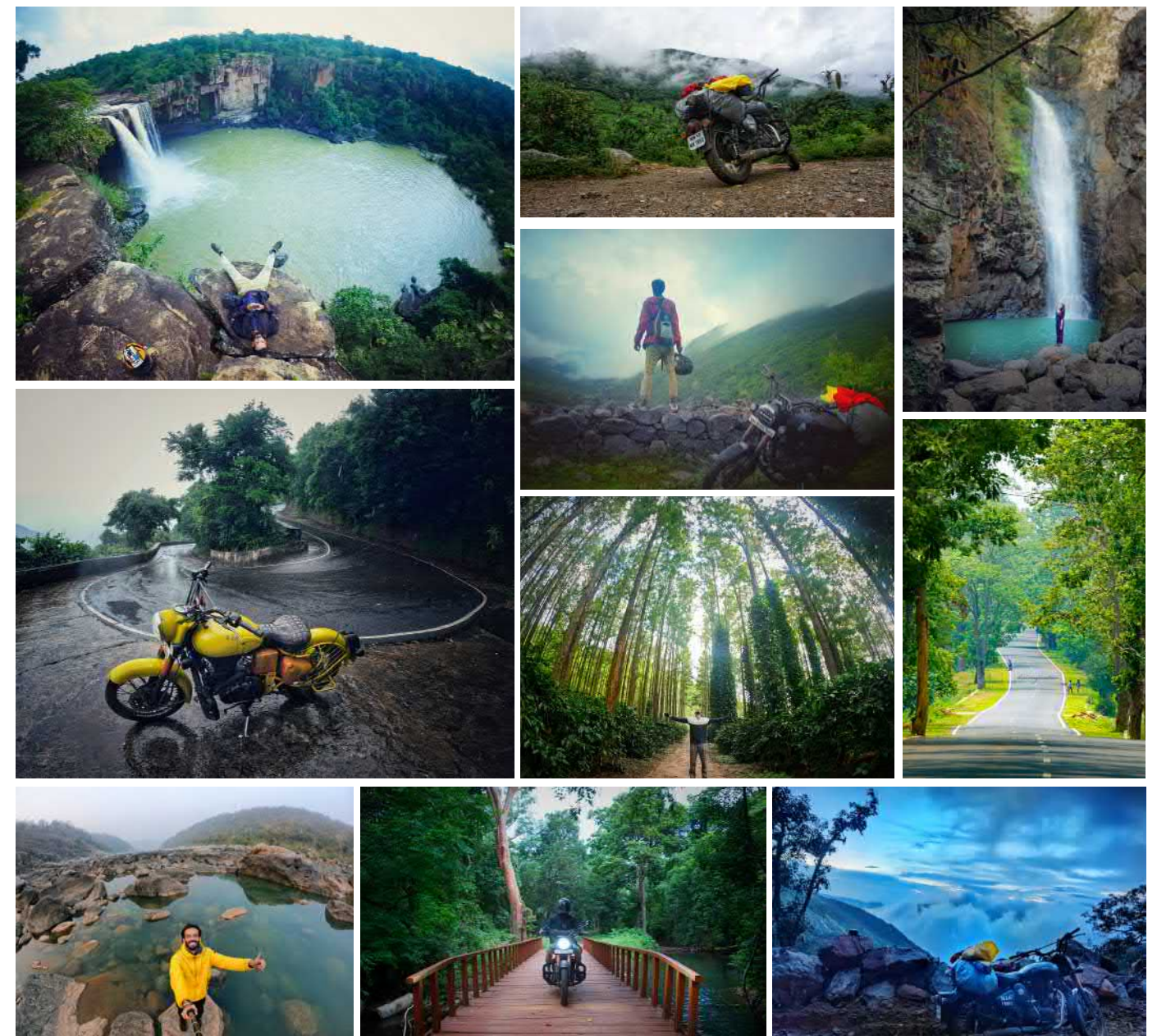
Infact the journey through lush green landscape and breath-taking views across Odisha will never bore you.

Recently, I went on a solo ride from Bhubaneswar to Maliguda covering Taptapani, Rayagada, Damanjodi and Koraput. The newly constructed ghat road from Mohana to Rayagada is a new paradise for riders. Though Maliguda is known for its tunnel, however the route from Koraput to Maliguda itself is a sight to behold for travellers with beautiful landscape, waterfalls and of course the tunnel bridge. Three years back when I

started exploring Odisha by road, there were people who warned me not to travel to unknown places as it could be risky. However, my experience proves them wrong.

I came to Odisha with many misconceptions, however with every ride that I took those thoughts vanished. I would suggest, just go on a weekend ride through Nayagarh-Daspalla road and Kalinga ghati and it would rejuvenate your hearts and mind.

Dhirendrasingh Rajpurohit, an engineer by profession and a travel blogger by passion



TASSAR, THE DIVINE FABRIC OF ODISHA



RAJA PARIJA



Odisha has been a traditional tassart producing state since ancient times. Earlier, hand-woven tassart textile used to be the major export item and regarded as royal adornment in Europe. Known for its greatest maritime power in the eastern coast of India, Odisha had a flourishing trade with Asian and European countries in the past.

However, during the colonial rule, Odisha's handloom sector began to languish with the invasion of British made clothes. The weaver community of the state were almost reduced to penury. It is also believed that to exercise monopoly over Odisha textiles, the colonials severed the fingers of many skilled handloom weavers. However, post-independence, the handloom sector in the state was revamped thereby giving a new lease of life to Odisha handloom with systematic planning and government policies. Slowly, it regained its lost glory and today it is acknowledged for its beautiful weaves. It is not confined to religious and festive use only. Traditionally called as 'Mathaa'

in Odia, tassart is not customarily offered to the deities in Odisha. Rather it is worn by the devotees while offering puja to the deities as it is considered auspicious. In Odia culture, it is also referred to as Amlan Vastra signifying that it never fades and is thus sacred forever. That's why it is revered as the divine fabric. Tassart culture, a branch of sericulture is an agro-based activity, mostly practiced by the tribals in the tropical forest rich districts of the state. It provides livelihood support to thousands of tassart farmers out of which almost 95% are from indigenous community. In fact, tassart culture in Odisha has been contributing significantly towards the promotion of the handloom sector on a sustainable basis. It provides a sizable employment opportunity to both the farmers and weavers in rural areas, especially women.

Gopalpur, a non-descript village in Rasulpur block of Jajpur district is a tassart Hub of Eastern India. A confluence of culture, tradition and tassart craft, the master weavers of the village

who inherited the traditional skill of weaving from their ancestors create wonder on tassart. With growing demand towards sustainable textiles, the fashion Gurus are exploring tassart as the sustainable and environment-friendly medium for its sheer elegance and soothing colours. Odisha tassart is slowly but surely becoming the most demanding fabric of haute couture for its incredible texture, feel and drape. In India, Odisha is the third largest producer of tassart cocoons. While in terms of quality of the fabric, Odisha is home to India's finest tassart textiles.

The Odisha Tassart textile industry needs to be projected both at the government and non-government level. The export market needs to be expanded more effectively through product diversification, enhanced quality and authentic tassart products as per the market needs to keep the brand image of Odisha tassart intact.

Raja Parija, a bureaucrat on a mission to preserve and promote Odisha's cultural heritage

NUAKHAI SPECIAL RECIPE

Muga Rasa Bara

(Mung bean dumplings, soaked in a flavoured sugar syrup)

BY BARNALI RATH

Yellow mung beans (Moong/Muga Dal) batter is deep fried into soft dumplings (pakoras) and then soaked in a sugar syrup to give it a sweet and juicy texture.

Ingredients & Recipe Details

(All measurements are standard cup measures)

- Yellow Mung dal 1.5 cups
- Sugar 1 cup
- Green Cardamom 3-4 pieces
- Salt 1/4th tsp
- Cooking soda 1/4 tsp
- Water 2 cups
- Oil for deep frying
- Soak the mung dal in water for 8-12 hours or overnight.
- Drain and wash the soaked dal. Grind it in a mixer-grinder, till smooth. Do not add water while grinding, as we need a thick batter.
- Add salt, cooking soda and whisk the batter for 5-7 minutes. Whisk in clockwise direction and continue the process till the batter becomes light and airy.
- Heat some refined oil in a kadhai.
- Drop grape sized batter portions, gently, into the oil.
- Gently move and turn the dumplings to fry evenly from all sides.
- Remove them on a tissue paper when turned light golden



Syrup

- Take water and sugar in pan. Add coarsely crushed green cardamom.
- Simmer for about 10-15 mins. The consistency of the syrup should be light and thin. If thickens, add a little water and make it thinner.
- Switch off the flame and keep it aside.
- Add the fried pakoras (dumplings) to warm sugar syrup. Allow it to soak for an hour and come down to room temperature.
- Remove from the syrup and serve.

Nuakhai being an agrarian festival, food forms an indispensable part of it. People in western Odisha celebrate the day relishing various popular cuisines of the region. In an effort to give you a peek of this cultural festival, we bring you a recipe prepared during Nuakhai.

Barnali Rath is a Recipe Curator and runs a culinary channel on Youtube called The Kitchen Script

1st

Place Winner
Odisha Through Your Lens
Photography Contest:

Satyam Bhuyan



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