

ODISHA UNRAVELLED

April 2021

A Newsletter by Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha



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Takes Centre Stage
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PURPLE HERON, MANGALAJODI, CHILIKA

Picture Credit : Manoj Das

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ODISHA UNRAVELLED

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



ODISHA
INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET.

FOREWORD



JYOTI PRAKASH PANIGRAHI

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

Odisha has set an example for other states by showing its resilience in face of adversity. Setting precedents in good governance, Odisha government has managed to bring about a positive change in people's lives. This is evident through the proactive steps taken to ensure revival of the Tourism sector during the pandemic.

With an aim to bring the benefits of tourism to the hinterlands of Odisha, we are developing the hospitality infrastructure in identified destinations. Train-

ing and skill development along with regulation of trade related to tourism is imperative for the sector's growth and hence, we are taking strategic steps towards achieving the proposed goal.

From developing Odisha tourism for greater resilience against disruptive events such as cyclones and pandemics to ensuring responsible design of new tourism products, we are committed to preserve, empower and promote all aspects of the sector while making it socially and economically sustainable.

MESSAGE



ASIT KUMAR TRIPATHY, IAS

*Chairman, Western Odisha Development Council (WODC)
and Principal Advisor to Hon'ble Chief Minister*

It's true the pandemic delivered a huge blow to the tourism sector but it also strengthened our vision of developing Odisha's tourism and hospitality infrastructure that'll not only have greater resilience against such disruptive events but also empower the populace with sustainable livelihood.

In this regard, we are planning to boost private sector investments for developing tourism in the state. Our focus is on integrated master planning and development of priority destinations to enable creation of niche tourism and hospitality products through private sector investments.

This is part of our vision towards making Odisha a sought-after beach destina-

tion. Despite the pandemic, we have already started executing the master plan of developing the Puri-Konark and Talsari-Udaypur Beachfronts on a priority mode.

Besides, Odisha is taking focused strides to develop the hospitality sector and enrich the experience of tourists through scheme-based interventions like introduction of cruises and houseboats, heritage properties, homestays and upgradation of existing traditional boats for tourists.

From conservation of heritage, natural environment and rich wilderness to creation of innovative and sustainable tourism products, we are on a mission to establish Odisha as a hub of diverse tourism offerings.

EDITOR'S NOTE



VISHAL DEV, IAS

*Principal Secretary, Tourism,
Sports & Youth Services*

Recognised as one of the best States in handling the pandemic, Odisha started the year 2021 on the right note. Every event scheduled as per the State's Tourism calendar was successfully organised with strict adherence to Covid-19 guidelines.

Paving the way for revival of tourism sector in the State, Odisha Tourism's flagship glamping event 'Eco Retreat' 2020-21 which was held across five diverse locations, viz. Bhitarkanika, Daringbadi, Hirakud, Konark and Satkosia, concluded successfully with an overall occupancy of 50.31%.

The state's emerging brand value as a champion of responsible tourism was also strengthened by winning the Silver Award for 'Best Future Forward State' at the 6th Outlook India Responsible Tourism Awards, which was organised for the first time outside the National Capital of Delhi, at Eco Retreat Odisha in Konark.

Thanks to the commitment and passion of the people involved in revival of the sector, our state's contribution to promoting responsible tourism is now well-established. On behalf of Odisha Tourism, I invite all our readers to come and explore Odisha, India's best kept secret.

FOR THOSE WHO MISSED THE ULTIMATE GLAMPING GETAWAY

After garnering a surge of popularity with its debut as Marine Drive Eco Retreat in 2019-2020, Odisha Tourism's flagship three-month glamping festival – Eco Retreat Odisha – was back in 2020-2021, this time multiplied by five! Backed by the state's stellar record in COVID management, Odisha Tourism set up the Eco Retreats at five unique locations with a view to offer tourists the best of Odisha's diverse environs – Bhitarkanika, Daringbadi, Hirakud, Konark and Satkosia. Starting from 9th December, 2020, the glamp camps attracted travel-bugs from across India, who packed their bags for a much-needed break. The event concluded on 8th March in Konark while the other four locations closed the curtains on 28th February, 2021. Despite the pandemic, the event witnessed an overall occupancy of over 50.31%, thanks to the synergised application of SOPs and technology for added safety of tourists.

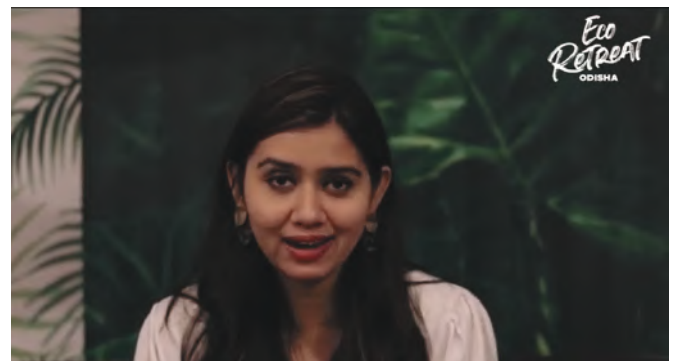
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FROM THE MEMORY MAKERS



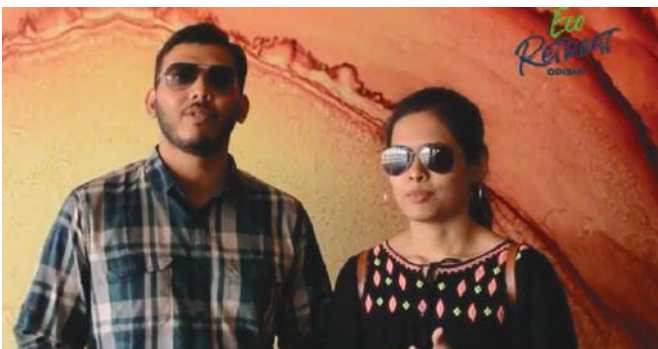
Had a great stay at Eco Retreat. Lovely place, good vibe, perfect weekend getaway. Lovely service, very friendly, the food is good. We had a great time. We're definitely coming back again.

PALLAVI & LAVANYA (KONARK)



I went on a trek with my friends and then saw Jupiter and Saturn through stargazing. This place is just beautiful. The air is so nice and pollution-free. You should plan your next trip to this place very soon.

PRAMITA (SATKOSIA)



The stay in the tents is very nice and all the amenities provided are very good. The food here was quite delicious. We went to see the Hirakud Dam and when we came back in the evening a nice cultural programme was organised. This place is actually a hidden treasure.

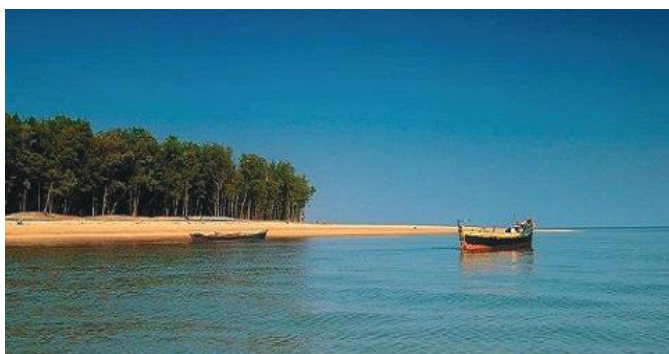
ABHIJEET & ROSALIN (HIRAKUD)



We like how Eco-retreat is promoting places in Odisha which are underrated and not very popular. We pay a lot to go outside the state to visit similar places which we already have here in Odisha. This is a must-have experience, and everyone should come here.

ALICE, VIDYASHA AND HANSIKA (DARINGBADI)

RIDING A NEW WAVE OF BEACH TOURISM



Blessed with 482 km coastline, Odisha has been taking rapid strides in establishing the State as a prime hub of beach tourism. Envisaging development of beach destinations, integrated tourism master plans including the Chandrabhaga Beachfront Plan at Konark and Talsari-Udaypur Beachfront Promenade Plan at Balasore were recently approved by Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik.

The Puri-Konark Beachfront masterplan envisages holistic and inclusive development of a kilometre long stretch at Chandrabhaga beach into a day tourism destination through Water sports, recreation zones, promenades and bicycle tracks, retail zones, public engagement facilities such as open air theatres, kids' play area, sunrise viewing decks, adventure sports, etc. The stretch will be beautified through native landscaping and in adherence to good practices in sustainability, such as dune protection and stabilisation, solar lighting, modern waste management systems and community participation.

Balasore's Talsari-Udaypur Beachfront, envisions an aesthetically designed sustain-

able landscaped promenade along the 2.4 km long stretch which includes intermittent kiosks, rain shelters, seating islands, restaurants, jogging tracks, viewing decks, along with beach infrastructure such as public amenities like a parking zone, toilets, shower panels, drinking water, etc.

With a view to internationalising its offerings, Odisha Tourism has also prioritised the operationalisation of **beach shacks** at various beachfronts offering tourists gastronomic experiences commensurate with beach leisure. Safety and security have been incorporated, with lifeguard teams and safety monitoring systems.

Apart from the integrated master planning of beach destinations, Odisha has been scaling leaps and bounds in upgrading other beaches of the State following the **Blue Flag certification by FEE Denmark** of Puri's Golden Beach as one among eight certified beaches in India. Department of Tourism has identified five beaches to be upgraded for the coveted certification, viz. Pir Jahania, Niladri and Muhan Beaches in Puri District and Haripur and Pati Sonapur Beaches in Ganjam District.

TAMPARA LAKE UNDERGOES FACELIFT

The development of Tampara Lakefront Project was jointly executed by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha



In a bid to showcase Odisha as a vibrant tourism hub of global standards, Tampara Lakefront Project, developed under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Union Ministry of Tourism, was recently inaugurated by Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Steel Shri Dharmendra Pradhan. Union Minister of State for Tourism and Culture (I/C) Shri Prahlad Singh Patel addressed the gathering through a virtual message.

This development is part of the Integrated Development of Coastal Circuit under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme for which INR 73.48 crore had been sanctioned for destination development of Gopalpur, Tampara, Satapada and Barkul which includes INR 2.67 crore as State share. Of the sanctioned amount, INR 52.96 crore has been released by GOI. 81% of the released funds have already been utilised for development of these four destinations till date.

For the development of Tampara, under the Integrated Development of Beach Circuit of Swadesh Darshan Scheme, INR 26.58 crore had

been sanctioned out of which INR 21.78 crore has been utilised as part of the Phase I development with INR 4.8 crore earmarked for Phase II development.

Facilities like, public convenience & tourist reception, pavement area, parking, food court, watch tower, street furniture, gazebo, and open-air theatre among others have been created along with procurement of water sports equipment like kayaks, banana boats, Jet skis etc., as part of the Phase I development of the project.

To further enrich the tourist experience, Phase II of the development will include an eco-resort, a scenic pathway/boardwalk to the beach, lake side promenade and other tourist amenities.

Shri Subhash Chandra Behera – Hon'ble MLA, Chatrapur, Shri Vishal Kumar Dev, IAS – Principal Secretary, Tourism, Shri Vijay Amrut Kulange, IAS – District Collector, Ganjam, Shri Keerthi Vasan V, IAS – Sub-Collector, Berhampur and Smt. Anjana Panda – Commissioner, Berhampur Municipal Corporation were other dignitaries gracing the occasion.

A RECREATIONAL APPROACH TO ODISHA'S WATERBODIE

Cruise Tourism to drop anchor at Odisha's resplendent water bodies through operationalisation of catamarans



Odisha is blessed with an abundance of rivers and lakes and there's more to these waters than drinking it. With a view to boost tourism offerings in these waterbodies, Department of Tourism has identified key destinations to turn it into a hub of recreational activities.

To promote water-based recreation in river Mahanadi, Odisha Tourism through Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) has upgraded the existing infrastructure at the Silver City Boat Club, Cuttack which had been adversely impacted during Cyclone Fani. The new boat club includes a floating Jetty, Booking Counter and complex for lifeguards, toilet complex, a restaurant & bar, adequate parking space and a park with children's play area. The infrastructure will be further augmented

in phases to add an additional floating jetty in due course. OTDC is now welcoming applications from various operators to operate Jet Ski, Speed Boat and Day Cruises.

Efforts are also being made to promote cruise tourism over multiple waterbodies. In this regard, the State Govt. had procured Catamarans in 2014 under Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) for using them in selected water bodies of state for tourism and recreation purpose. Department of Tourism intends to give four of these catamarans to private operators for day and overnight cruise operationalisation on lease basis.

Besides, a scheme has also been drafted to upgrade traditional wooden tourist boats to IR Class compliant FRP boats. In the first phase, the scheme will be targeted at Chilika Lake.

BOOSTING TOURISM WITH PREMIUM HOSPITALITY

To meet the expectations of premium tourists visiting the State, high-end hospitality properties are being developed. Driving this segment of luxury tourism will be the three new star category hotels in capital city Bhubaneswar.

RECENTLY INAUGURATED



Complementing the DN Regalia Mall in Patrapada, 5-Star Hotel - VIVANTA by Taj Hotels was recently inaugurated by Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik on 17 February 2021.

TO BE INAUGURATED



Two 5-star hotels - Welcom Hotel by ITC and Lemon Tree Premier are set to be launched in Dumduma and Maitre Vihar respectively.

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Single Window Portal to Ensure Investor Delight

- Contact Dept. of Tourism (pmu@odishatourism.gov.in) to identify opportunities and locations
- Prepare your Project DPR.
- Sign-up on the GO-SWIFT portal, (24-hour activation period).
- Submit your PEAL (Project Evaluation & Allotment of Land) form.
- Complete your application process with payment of a fee as per the slab.
- Government will contact you with queries/ clarifications if any, within 1 week of your application.



investodisha.gov.in/goswift



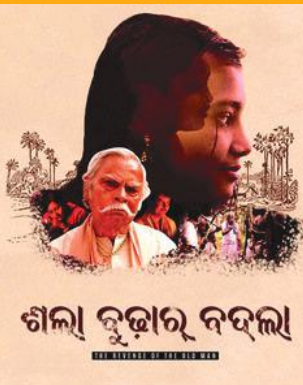
ODISHA'S ARTS AND CULTURE GAIN NATIONAL LIMELIGHT



PADMA SHRI SUDARSHAN SAHOO RECEIVES PADMA VIBHUSHAN

The prestigious Padma awards were conferred on six Odias this year. While five among them were honoured with the Padma Shri, the 1988 Padma Shri awardee Sudarshan Sahoo received the Padma Vibhushan, the second-highest civilian award for his contribution to the field of Art, especially the Shilpa Shastra – an ancient science of sculpture. The 86-year old has been actively involved in promotion of Odia culture and has founded the Sudarshan Crafts Museum in Puri and the Sudarshan Arts and Crafts Village in Bhubaneswar

THREE ODIA FILMMAKERS BAGGED THREE NATIONAL HONOURS AT THE 67TH NATIONAL FILM AWARDS.



Ace filmmakers Sabyasachi Mohapatra's 'Sala Budhar Badla' and Nilamadhav Panda's 'Kalira Atita' won a National Award each for Best Odia Film.



Puri-based filmmaker Ashutosh Pattnaik's won National Award in Best Arts and Culture Film under the non-feature film category for 'Srikshetra Ru Sahijata'.

NEW DAWN FOR ODISHA'S TOURISM & HOSPITALITY SECTOR



SACHIN RAMCHANDRA JADHAV
Director Tourism

The last couple of years witnessed a quantum shift in Odisha's tourism and hospitality sector. Department of Tourism has made rapid strides for its development. What has helped the State in various ways is the passionate and persistent execution of plans by the stakeholders working for the industry. The focus now is to introduce travellers to India's Best Kept Secret; the less known and the unsung legends, stories of the ethnic communities, destination beneath the maps, the culinary uniqueness and the warmth of the people here.

One-third of the topography of this coastal state is under forest cover. With a national park, two tiger reserves, several wildlife sanctuaries, diverse landscapes, magnificent monuments and vivid culture, Odisha presents an untapped reservoir of niche tourism experiences. To further the State's experiential tourism offerings to discerning travellers, the department has brought in key interventions:

Blue Flag Certification for 5 beach stretches

Post the Blue Flag certification of Golden Beach in Puri by FEE Denmark as one among cleanest eight beaches in India, the beach stretches of Pir Jahania, Niladri and Muhan in Puri and Haripur and Pati Sonapur in Ganjam districts are being developed. These clean-drive transformations will establish Odisha as a sought-after beach destination of India.

Luxury Glamping

Despite successive challenges posed due to Cyclone Fani and COVID-19 pandemic, strict adherence to COVID-19 guidelines and SOPs released by the State Government helped garner tremendous footfall to Eco-Retreat 2020-21. Gauging the overwhelming response received, the department decided to host the upcoming edition in six unique locations of the State.

Boosting Ecotourism through sustainable development

Looking at the surge in demand for offbeat experiences by tourists for birding, wildlife safari and trekking at ecotourism destinations, work is underway to double the room capacity of the existing nature camps and creation of eco-friendly structures like eco-cottages to facilitate night stays.

Hosting events and festivals

Strict adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols not only ensured events and festivals scheduled as per the events calendar to be successfully conducted but also set precedent for other states for revival of tourism sector. By organising The Konark Festival 2020 and International Sand Art Festival, Odisha was the first state in the country to start hosting events and reopen its border



for tourism. Resilience in face of adversity has shaped the collective conscience of the people to come together and work as a united front. This also bolstered the travel community's faith in us while opening avenues to add more events. We are actively working towards introducing events driven by different seasons to establish Odisha as year-round travel destination with niche experiences.

Promoting Odia Cuisine

As part of the State's culinary tourism offerings, the department will be introducing Nimantran - a chain of fine-dine restaurants in various districts with tourism potential. Managed and run by OTDC, these restaurants will serve an eclectic range of authentic Odia cuisine. In the first phase, Nimantran will be launched in Bhubaneswar, Puri and Sambalpur this year.

Introduction of Cruise Tourism

A new wave of recreational facilities will be introduced in various waterbodies and wetlands of the State. Four catamarans will be upgraded to offer Day and over-night luxury cruise experiences this year.

Scheme-based Interventions

In order to boost the hospitality sector while equally ensuring livelihood development of the local community, the Govt. is all set to introduce the Odisha Homestay Establishment Scheme. Through this scheme, the department envisages creation of immersive tourism for travellers who look for unique cultural experiences in hospitality, cuisine and other local ways of life while dwelling in local family homes. Besides, keeping in view the safety of tourists as well as operators and to ensure constant source of livelihood, the proposal for introduction of a special Scheme for upgradation of Traditional/Wooden Tourist carrying boats to that of FRP boats at Chilika has been approved by Hon'ble Chief Minister. Apart from this, the department is also exploring ways to develop and popularise Heritage Hotels of the State.

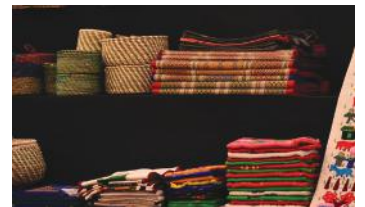
Besides the above, numerous initiatives are being aggressively taken up to revive tourism and hospitality sector and make it resilient to disruptive trends. While the vision is to establish Odisha as a tourism hub rivalling global standards, the mission to make the sector future-proof is being actively pursued.

LOCAL ART FINDS PLATFORM AT WEEKLY NIGHT BAZAAR

Handmade in Odisha-a Saturday Night Haat for Artists at Niladri Beach, Puri

Despite being hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector is showing signs of revival, thanks to the committed efforts of the people and organisations involved in the sector. Aimed at assisting the artists' community, Odisha Eco Tourism Foundation, a unit of Heritage Tours, Puri, in association with Puri District Administration and NGO Prabhav organized a "Saturday Night Artist's Bazaar" on 20 March 2021 from 5pm to 11 pm at Niladri Beach in Puri with plans to make it a weekly affair. "The event engages local artists through a dedicated weekly platform where they can showcase and sell their handicrafts to the visitors and encourage them to buy locally

made products. The event will be restarted again with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols," said event organizer Mr. Yugabrata Kar. The bazaar also engages artists who perform traditional dance and music, thus glorifying the ambience of the beach stretch. Beach vendors such as photographers, tea sellers, local snack sellers and foot masseurs also extend their services at the bazaar. With a view to promote the rich art and culture of Odisha, the foundation aims to make this weekly market a regular event. Further, plans are in place to take this initiative online where local artists can list themselves and share their art with the global audience.



LOOK WHO VISITED



Hon'ble President of India Shri. Ram Nath Kovind accompanied by First Lady Smt. Savita Kovind visited Odisha on a three-day tour. Hon'ble Governor Shri. Ganeshi Lal, Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri. Naveen Patnaik, Hon'ble Union Ministers Shri. Dharmendra Pradhan and Shri. Pratap Chandra Sarangi along with other senior officials received Hon'ble President and First Lady on their arrival.

He attended the 18th annual convocation of National Institute of Technology (NIT), Rourkela and inaugurated a Super Specialty Hospital at Rourkela Steel Plant. On his second day, he visited Jagannath Temple in Puri to offer his prayers to the holy trinity and also visited the iconic Sun Temple at Konark.

H.E. French Ambassador to India, Mr. Emmanuel Lenain, led the French delegation to Odisha and held discussions with Odisha Govt. officials on bilateral trade, economic cooperation and investment opportunity in the State. His four-day visit entailed visits to CITIIS project locations which included heritage sites like Debi Padahara and Ganga Jamuna tanks, the Kalinga Hockey Stadium and Odisha's key destinations like the Blue Flag certified Golden Beach in Puri, Chandrabhaga Beach, Konark Sun Temple, Raghurajpur Crafts village, Lingaraj Temple, Rajarani Temple and the Udayagiri Caves.

He also explored possibilities to enhance ties between universities of France and Odisha in the field of Sports, and boost investments in the State for Smart City and renewable energy projects.



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HERITAGE TAKES CENTRE STAGE

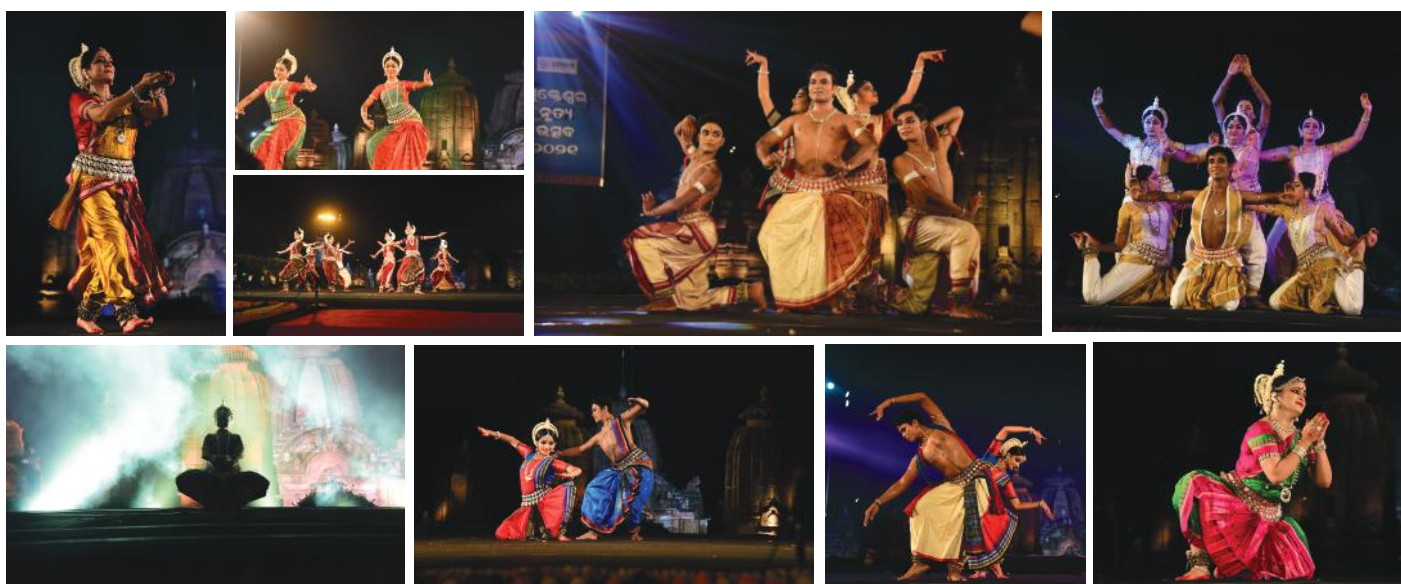
A glimpse of Odisha Tourism's recent flagship events

RAJARANI MUSIC FESTIVAL



Held against the backdrop of the 11th century Rajarani Temple in Bhubaneswar, the festival was a celebration of India's diverse traditions of classical music. The 3-day musical soiree, graced by maestros, filled the air with celestial music reinforcing the significance of this art as the cornerstone of spirituality.

MUKTESWAR FESTIVAL



The three-day annual flagship festival on Odissi dance was held on the manicured lawns of Mukteswar Temple in Bhubaneswar. Classical moves from noted danseuses coupled with a symphony of music turned the evening air at the 10th century temple ethereal.

DHAULI-KALINGA MAHOTSAV



Representing the various cultural hues of India is this three-day cultural extravaganza of performing arts. Held under the star lit skies, the amalgamation of various classical music, dance forms- both Indian and international and martial arts transform the Dhauli Shanti Stupa into a place of artistic brilliance.

VRINDABAN MAHOTSAV



Under the patronage of internationally acclaimed flautist Pt. Hariprasad Chaurasia, Bhubaneswar's Vrindaban Gurukul organised the 2nd edition of Vrindaban Mahotsav in association with Odisha Tourism. Apart from showcasing celebrated performances of maestros of Indian classical music, the event doubled up as a platform for the Gurukula's pupils to exhibit their art.

ODISHA TOURISM BAGS SILVER AWARD FOR 'BEST FUTURE FORWARD STATE' AT THE 6TH INDIA RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AWARDS

Department of Tourism successfully strengthened Odisha's emerging brand perception as a champion of responsible tourism



Odisha Tourism was conferred the Silver Award for “Best Future Forward State” at the sixth edition of the Indian Responsible Tourism Awards, organised for the first time outside the National Capital Territory of Delhi, at Eco Retreat Odisha in Konark. Kerala won the Gold category award in the same segment.

The awards recognise champions of ethical travel as a regional partner of the reputed World Travel Market's (WTM) Responsible Tourism Awards held in London.

Putting the state's community-managed ecotourism model at the forefront, Department of Tourism successfully strengthened Odisha's emerging brand perception as a champion of responsible tourism by hosting these awards at the state's flagship Eco Retreat- a venue which seamlessly combines luxury with sustainability.

“Odisha's contribution to promoting responsible tourism is

well established. Our ecotourism model of community-managed nature camps has since 2016 empowered rural populations with alternate and sustainable livelihood. From developing Odisha's tourism and hospitality infrastructure for greater resilience against disruptive events such as cyclones and pandemics, to ensuring responsible design of new tourism products – we have made sustainability our mantra”, said Mr. Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, Minister of State (IC) for Tourism & OLLC, Government of Odisha.

Active sessions were held during the summit involving presentations and discussions on sustainable solutions to manage water, waste and carbon footprints through community-oriented actions with community-led sustainable niche tourism project 'Ecotour Odisha' being highly appreciated by the delegates present.

Persons of eminence like Mr. Aman Nath, Founder & Chairman of Neemrana Hotels, Ra-



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Awardee Dr. Harish Hande, Co-founder of SELCO, Mr. Jaideep Bansal, COO of Global Himalayan Expedition, Mr. Chirag Mahajan Senior Manager at Waste Warriors and Ms. Manisha Shah, Advocacy Manager at Arghyam presented successful case studies involving sustainable tourism models while Ms. Bharati Chaturvedi, Founder & Director of Chintan Environmental Research & Action Group, Ms. Fiona Jeffery, OBE, Founder & Chairperson of Just a Drop and Ms. Anita Mendiratta, Special Advisor to Secretary General of the UNWTO and a strategic resource to the World Bank, WTTC, IATA and ATAG took the headline sessions through virtual address.

CAPACITY BUILDING TO REVIVE TOURISM



Odisha Tourism organised a workshop on “Contemporary Tourism Scenario - Strategies for Revival into the World of (New) Next Normal for the State of Odisha” at Eco-Retreat, Konark for the Tourist Officers of the State. The workshop was organised in association with Indian Institute of Tourism & Travel Management, Bhubaneswar to share the plans and strategies to revive and strengthen the sector over the next 3 years and expound on the vital role Tourist Officers need to play in promotion, development and sustainability of tourism in their respective districts. The event was attended by Hon’ble Minister of Tourism & OLLC Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, Principal Secretary Tourism Shri Vishal Dev, Director Tourism Shri Sachin R. Jadhav and Chairperson OTDC Smt. Shreemayee Mishra.

Urging the tourist officers to become the brand ambassador of their respective districts they

represent, Shri Vishal Dev said, “Tourist Officers have a crucial role to play in the implementation of the revival strategies. They need to act as facilitators in attracting private sector investments and work towards improving ease of doing business in the state. This will not only expedite the creation of new tourism products but also add to the economic development”. He deliberated on creating experiential tourism products like homestays, heritage properties, caravan tourism, houseboats and cruises among others.

The workshop comprised 5 sessions headed by eminent academicians and experienced professionals from the tourism sector. Dr. Md. Sabir Hussain, Nodal Officer (Head), IITTM Bhubaneswar gave a presentation on the Contemporary Tourism Scenario as per the data and analytics of a global survey conducted by the UNWTO. Prof. Sitikantha Mishra, Dean – cum Advisor, School of

Tourism & Hospitality Management, S ‘O’ A Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, presented various strategies the state needs to adopt for quick revival and development of tourism sector. Celebrated Architect and Photographer Shri Shakti Nanda explored the Potential of Nature based Tourism in Odisha. Shri Jaideep Bansal, Global Himalayan Expeditions stressed on empowering the local communities through sustainable tourism development, skill development and capacity training. He spoke of the role the stakeholders need to play not just for revival but strengthening of the tourism sector. Shri Jitu Mishra, Co-founder, Sarna Educational and Cultural Services talked about the need of Immersive Organic Tourism Experiences through grassroots entrepreneurship. The workshop ended with interesting Management Games by Dr. Adyasha Das, Associate professor and Coordinator-Workshop, IITTM Bhubaneswar.

A HercUlean SHOW OF ENDURANCE AND MIGHT

The 2nd edition of HercUlean ITF Triathlon- Konark 2021 saw 160 triathletes from across 20 different states and armed forces participate in a gruelling race at Konark. Organised with strict adherence to Covid-19 guidelines, the race was held on 27th February by HercUlean Triathlon in association with Department of Sports & Youth Services, Department of Tourism and the Indian Triathlon Federation.

There were participations in four different categories

- 22 in Full Distance Tri (3.5km Swim, 180km Cycle, 42km Run)
- 74 in Tri.5 distance (1.75km Swim, 90km cycle, 21km run)
- 50 in Olympic Distance (1.5km Swim, 40km Cycling, 10km run)
- 14 in Sprint Category Tri (750meter Swim, 3950 in 5km Joy of running)



“The triathletes proved that India has a great scope for this sport and with states like Odisha supporting it, we can soon invite international triathletes too to the state”, said Abhishek Mishra, Founder & CEO, Tabono Sports who started this Triathlon event at Konark in 2020. Held at one of the most iconic destinations in the state- Konark, the racetrack took the triathletes on a scenic route starting from Ramachandi to Chandrabhaga Beach. Since, there were different cut-off trimming in each race category, the event lasted for over 30 hours from 6 am on Saturday till 12:30 pm the next day.

Winners:

Herculean full distance race:

- Vardhan Shirish from Pune, Maharashtra finished 3.5km swim, 180 km cycling, and 42k run in 13 hr 38 min.

Tri.5 race category (1.75km swim, 90km cycling, 21km run):

- Cdr Yashpal Yadav from Indian Navy finished the race in 6 hr 30 min 23 sec in men's category
- Tapasya Singh from Bangalore, Karnataka finished the race in 7hrs 16min in women's category

Olympic Distance (1.5km swim, 40km cycling, 10km run):

- Rahul Shinde from Pune, Maharashtra clocked 2 hr and 11min in men's category
- Aarthi S from Chennai, Tamil Nadu clocked 2 hrs 51min in women's category

BEACH SOCCER - A GOAL TO DESTRESS AND REJUVENATE

The first of its kind beach soccer tournament is a maiden initiative to integrate football and the stunning coastline in Konark



In a bid to establish wellbeing and recreation as the cornerstone of tourism in the state, CII Odisha in association with Department of Tourism organized Beach Soccer Corporate Tournament at the Chandrabhaga Beach in Konark. 10 teams comprising corporate sector companies and PSUs battled it out through 27 matches in this 2-day tournament where Tata Steel emerged as the Champion of Beach Soccer 2021 by beating Paradeep Port Trust in 2-1 penalty shoot-out.

Two exhibition matches were organized for Women Entrepreneurs and CII and Yi members where Capt. Dibya Shankar Mishra, Hon'ble Minister of Industry, MSME, Energy and Home, was the goalkeeper in one of the friendly matches played by the corporates. This maiden initiative was very much appreciated by senior government officials, business leaders. Media and FC Odisha members.

It is well-known that vacation improves physical and mental health, happiness and productivity. Hence, the objective to destress members through friendly football matches was effectively met at one of the most iconic beach destinations in the state.

ARRIBADA IN EASTERN COAST



AR SHAKTI NANDA



Coastlines of Odisha in the first quarter of every year witness 'Arribada' when over half a million Olive Ridley turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) gather for mass nesting.

Arribada is a unique phenomenon where the pelagic species of Olive Ridley turtles try to increase the chances of survival of their offspring. Predominantly concentrated at Rushikulya by the mouth of the river Devi and Gahirmatha beaches of Odisha, this is a unique gift of nature. The smallest sea turtles lay more eggs at one place a single time to supersede the consumption of predators, thereby increasing the survival rate of offspring. A single turtle can lay over 110 - 140 eggs and reports suggest that out of every thousand hatchlings that enter the sea only one manages to reach full adulthood. This extreme low rate of survival has thus put them under the International Union for Conservation of Nature's red list. Olive Ridley dig pits on the beach using their hind flaps

to lay eggs which are then covered with sand. Hatchlings crawl out of these eggs after an incubation period of 52-58 days and head straight for the sea with the rising sun as their lead.



Though Olive Ridley turtles are common around the world, mass nesting occurs only at few places. In the Pacific, large nesting occurs in Mexico and Costa Rica. In India, besides the rookeries of Rushikulya, mouth of the river Devi & Gahirmatha in Odisha, nesting of Olive Ridley turtles occurs in lesser numbers in Versova, Perambudur, Anjarle, Gaonkhadi in Maharashtra. A mass nesting site has been recently discovered on the Andaman Islands.

The Gahirmatha rookery of

Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary comes under protected area and tourism during Arribada is restricted. The best place to experience Arribada for tourists in Odisha is Rushikulya rookery. The local villagers have taken a keen interest in conservation and protection of this endangered species and readily support government's initiatives towards the same.

Since 2003, the Department of Forest & Environment has been tremendously proactive in improvising protection, conservation and documentation of these exotic guests. More than 150 people are directly engaged by the Department, along with the support of 200 volunteers from local villages, who constantly monitor the 5.5-kilometre-long coastal belt at Rushikulya. This phenomenon is a sight to behold for wildlife lovers and conservationists.

Shakti Nanda is an Architect and is passionate about Nature Photography



ASHISH KUMAR JENA

THE BIRDER'S SOUL



It was a cold misty morning. Armed with my gear for a special Birding expedition, I set off along the winding trails of Mangalajodi Wetlands in pursuit of a small beautiful bird called the Bluethroat well before dawn. The Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*) is a member of the thrush family which I had spotted when I used to do Birdwatching with my binoculars only. But the impetus to document the experience added extra kilos to my birding gear which included a camera, lenses, tripod and a gimbal. While documenting a small, fluttering and elusive bird like the Bluethroat with a heavy handheld camera coupled with a telephoto lens poses a veritable challenge before the Birder, it is his soul that sustains him through this frustrating yet satisfying ordeal.

The Bluethroat, a small passerine, is a polytypic species similar in size to the Indian Robin at 13–14 cm that breeds across northern Europe, Asia and Alaska and winters from northern Africa to Indian Subcontinent. It is generally considered to be an Old-World flycatcher. Ever-increasing understanding of the processes that govern the loop migration of the Bluethroat are observations on migratory flyways, studies of stopover ecology and behaviour, and research of orientation and navigational abilities. This small beauty of nature has many folkloric names referring to its virtuosity as a singer. It has the most varied song repertoire amongst all avian species and hence called the “the nightingale of Lapland”.

As the sun shone, dehazing the mist, I sat on the dew-draped grass on the earthen bund, patiently waiting for the spring song of the male and a glance of its tell-tale necklace. After what seemed like an eternity, it started to scuttle under the wil-

low through the grassy veil and with it came the trills, buzzes, bell-like sounds and a sharp dry chak. My heart swelled with joy and adrenaline pumped through my veins while I adjusted the focus of my DSLR. As I started clicking, the camera shutter shrouded the sound of the loquacious male flitting from nearby willow to willow, stopping for a moment on each one to sing his operetta of song. By swelling his brilliant blue and orange throat and chest just like a miniature Robin, he chirped, whistled and warbled his heart out. Over the next three hours under the sun, I followed the male, tip-toeing soundlessly to avoid its attention while maintaining a critical distance that birders follow as their second nature, pausing, watching and waiting for that perfect moment to capture the beauty through my lens. After a while, the male was joined by a female and adding to my sheer luck was a juvenile that approached them. The male foraged a caterpillar as he scuttled closer and closer to the scene of the action under the veil of weeds until it was caught by the viewfinder- completely filling my frame.

Of all places of birding in India, including the Keoladeo Ghana National Park, Ranganathittu, Thol Bird Sanctuary, Koriyakkerai National Park, Dandeli Birding Sites including Himalayan sites of Satal and Pangot, the rich wetlands of Mangalajodi, Chilka, gives the most promising vantage for a birder. The biodiversity and rich migration have the power to captivate you in its serenity and if you are patient enough you might find peace within the Birder's Soul.

Ashis Ku Jena is an Odisha Administrative Service (OAS) Officer and is passionate about Birding & Bird Photography



PANCHAMI MANOO UKIL

SADHABA BOHU RITUAL IN DANDAMUKUNDAPUR VILLAGE IN PURI

They look like tiny blood red cushions with spidery legs, crawling slowly out of the earth. They have been a part of the lives of everyone growing up in the 80's and 90's. They are the beautiful little Red Velvet Mites or "Sadhaba Bohu".

The presence of red velvet mites is extremely important to the environment. These mites are part of a community of soil arthropods that is critical in terms of rates of decomposition in woodlands, and in maintaining the structure of the entire ecosystem. By feeding on insects that eat fungi and bacteria, they stim-

ulate the decomposition process and help maintain balance in soil ecosystems. And when they are absent from the soil in a particular area where they survived before, many critical processes in the soil are slowed down and fertility of soil reduces greatly. Down the ages, our traditions, customs and rituals have been intrinsically entwined with science and wisdom. One such custom celebrating the contribution of Red Velvet Mites to maintaining the fertility of soil is found in Dandamukundapur village near Puri. When the sadhaba bohus appear with the first rains just around the time of the famous 'Raja' festival, the children of the village are sent to the revered 'Bada Pokhari' or central village pond to pick up the mites, place them on large brass plates and bring them to a venue earmarked for the ritual. The women folk then place flowers, 'durva' and

of the soil, both crucial for a good harvest. The plate carrying the velvet mites is then placed on a tradition rope 'douli' or swing tied from a tree and swung to the accompaniment of folk songs. This swing is then reserved for the girls and women to swing on during the three days of the harvest festival of 'Raja'. After the ritual is over, the sadhaba bohus are returned to the soil besides the large tank from where they had been picked up.

Red velvet mites are still found abundantly in areas where deforestation is minimum and soil moisture is at optimum levels. However, they rarely appear in urban areas due to the effects of large scale construction and dry soil because of dropping groundwater levels. Rooted in our culture is a reverence for the interconnectedness in nature, symbolised by such rituals as this one at Dandamukundapur that advocate respect for all life forms. Everytime a species goes extinct, there is a trickle down effect on life-processes and chains of existence on earth. When these effects multiply beyond control, we find ourselves in the grip of pandemics, uncertain and helpless. The COVID-19 pandemic is a repeat alarm for us to slow down our ambitions and understand that we are only a part of creation and not the creators.

Panchami Manoo Ukil is a Birdwatcher and Educator



ulate the decomposition process and help maintain balance in soil ecosystems. And when they are absent from the soil in a particular area where they survived before, many critical processes in the soil are slowed down and fertility of soil reduces greatly. Down the ages, our traditions,

'barkolipatra' (Bermuda grass and leaves of Indian Jujube) on the plate and wave a lamp before it, signifying devotion and reverence to the sadhaba bohus. This tradition symbolises the reverence for the 'sadhaba bohu' as a harbinger of a good monsoon as well as a sustainer of the fertility

BOVINE CARETAKERS OF CHILIKA

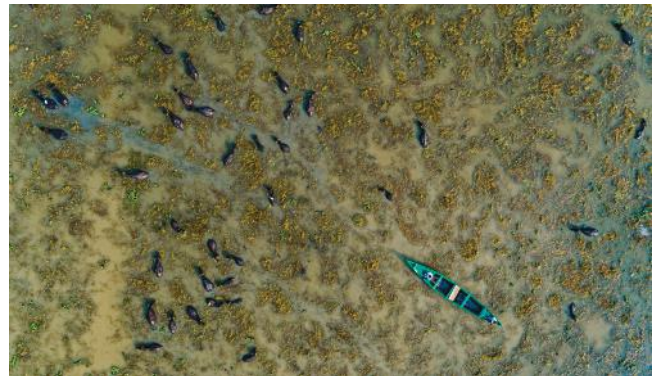


AVINASH KHEMKA



Endemic to the Chilika ecosystem is a unique species of buffalo that is endowed with the capability of entering deep into the brackish waters of the wetlands. These bovines graze on the grass and other vegetation that grows under water, drink the brackish water to quench their thirst, and remain immersed inside the water for days together. They are genetically wired with resilience to withstand the marshy environment and extreme weather conditions. They are tethered or let loose in the open under hot sun or heavy rains. Though low yielding, that fact that they are hardy and zero maintenance makes them a viable business option for villagers who rear them.

Chilika buffaloes clean the inside of the lake and wetlands by grazing on unruly vegetation, thereby clearing trails and channels for boats within the wetlands. They oxygenate the waters with their brisk movements and convert the grass fodder into highly nutritious milk. The buffalo droppings are nutritious feed for fish and other organisms. When they move in the waters, their movement forces the small fish, frogs and insects to come to the surface of the water. This is the reason why we often see birds sitting on the backs of the buffaloes and hovering low in the air just behind the buffaloes, to feed on such fish, frogs and insects. Chilika buffaloes being an endemic species are an integral part of the functioning of the Chilika ecosystem, especially the biodiversity food chain. Therefore, it is imperative to safeguard this buffalo germplasm in order to maintain ecological balance in the habitat. As they are reducing in numbers due to disinterest in the younger gener-



ation of families that rear these animals, policies and programmes need to be adopted by government and other concerned agencies to align conservation of this species with research on genetic variations to find out if the dairy yield can be enhanced.

Avinash Khemka is an Industrialist and avid Wildlife Photographer



ROSALIN DASH

EXPERIENCES GALORE IN INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET

A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions!

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Avast coastline, pristine blue waters of the Bay of Bengal, highlands of the Eastern Ghats, lush green canopy, and high plateaus of the Chhotanagpur with the mighty river Mahanadi meandering through the landscape to merge with the sea. We're talking about Odisha- India's best kept secret!

The trend of waiting for the annual vacation is a passé. Weekend travel and short trips are the new fad. With families becoming nuclear and youth financially independent, quick breaks have emerged as the best way to unwind. As the focus turns towards the journey and experience rather than following an itinerary to a destination, Odisha is evolving into a space of immersive travel.

Immersive Travel with Sarna



Odisha offers ample of immersive travel desBlessed with nature's bounty and a rich cultural heritage, Odisha offers ample immersive travel destinations to explore and experience. Such trips are conducted by 'Sarna Travel'. The name 'Sarna' which means 'Sacred Grove' resonates well with our idea of trips to places protected

and worshipped by indigenous communities of Odisha. These trips echo Sarna's vision to protect mother nature as she protects and provides for the mankind.

The idea of immersive travel is to let a traveler experience the stories and legends of the place



rather than just checking things off the fixed itinerary. Vast coastline of Odisha, gorge of Satkosia, peaks of Koraput, culturally rich villages of Kandhamal, majestic palace of Belgadia, forests of Barbara and Dhani, picturesque Mangalajodi, pristine beauty of Keonjhar – the list of curated experiences in Odisha is endless.

Currently, Sarna offers curated immersive travel experiences for travelers to unexplored regions of Odisha. The bundled experiences and organised trips for travel enthusiasts are conducted nor very far from the twin city of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar. They can be opted for a weekend escapade.

Introducing Craft Tourism

The state has many craft destinations; each region having a craft, art or weave unique to itself. Through the concept of craft tourism, Sarna offers travelers a walkthrough to interact, learn and see the life of an artisan and buy crafts to support them. It is an experience that brings joy of a lifetime.

Like they say, 'Jobs fill your pocket, adventures fill your soul' and the adventures that awaits one in Odisha has it all!

Sarna Travel is brainchild of Sarna Educational and Cultural Services LLP

Rosalin Dash is a Corporate HR turned Social Entrepreneur



CHEF NISAR AHMED

BEAT THE HEAT WITH THIS HEALTHY ODIA CUISINE

Pakhala Bhata is a perfect Odia cuisine dish to beat the heat and lead a healthy life!

Although eaten throughout year by people across Odisha but in summer its importance grows manifold.

The dish is very popular in other parts of India like West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam, Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu but named differently.

It is best suited in hot climate especially for breakfast or lunch and comes with lot of health benefits.

Traditionally, rice is cooked in the afternoon and its excess water is drained. After the rice cools down to room temperature, it is soaked fully in water and stored in an earthen clay pot.

This covered pot with soaked rice is left overnight at regular room temperature. The rice gets fermented by the next morning and is eaten for breakfast as well as Lunch.

Also added with little salt, roasted jeera, coriander leaves and ginger, this combo blends into an irresistible taste. The water is called 'Torani'.

At Kanika restaurant we serve some authentic special accompaniments with Pakhala like Saga Badi Nadia, Chingudi Bhaja, Chuna Macha Besara, Rohi Macha Bhaja, Badi Chura, Mix Bhaja and Aloo Baigan Bharta.

- Saga Badi Nadia is a preparation of local green leafy vegetables sautéed with badi and grated coconut.
- Chingudi bhaja is a preparation of pan-fried prawns with a blend of dry spice
- Chuna Macha Besara is a

preparation of River Fresh small Fish (Chuna Macha) cooked little dry with mustard paste.

- Rohi Macha Bhaja is a dry preparation of Rohu fish, Slow cooked on Tawa
- Badi Chura - Crushed Urad Dal badi with green chillies, garlic & onion
- Mix Bhaja - Sautéed seasonal fresh vegetables
- Aloo Baigan Bharta - Roasted potatoes & eggplant mash with local flavours

It is also eaten with raw onion, cucumber and green chilli.

There is an option to drain excess water from Pakhala and eat it with yogurt and a slight sprinkle of salt.

Health benefits as highlighted by Nutritionists are as under:

1. After consuming in break-

fast or Lunch, it keeps the body light and also energetic.

2. Beneficial bacteria get produced in abundance.
3. Controls Stomach ailments.
4. Being very fibrous, it removes constipation.
5. Normalizes blood pressure and helps reduce hypertension.
6. Removes allergy induced problems and skin-related ailments.
7. Regular eating keeps fresh infections at bay.
8. Provides youthful and radiant look.
9. Richest source of vitamin B12 for vegans.

#DoYouKnow Odias welcome summer by celebrating Pakhala Dibasa on 20th March every year.



Nisar Ahmed is the Corporate Chef of Mayfair Group of Hotels

ABOUT ODISHA TOURISM

Established as Department of Tourism & Culture in 1973, the Department of Tourism (DoT) strives to:

1. Promote diverse and sustainable tourism with a view to enhancing the national and global visibility and favourability of Odisha as a prime tourist destination
2. Create employment opportunities to bring socio-economic benefits to the community and boosting community participation in tourism
3. Preserve, enrich and promote Odisha's unique cultural heritage and ecological diversity through sustainable development

Apart from undertaking various initiatives for the development of tourism infrastructure and services in the state under the Odisha Tourism Policy 2016, DoT aims to establish its brand globally and enhance the favourability of Odisha as a prime tourist destination through the twin strategies of event based promotion and destination experience promotion, through innovative advertising and multimedia based outreach to national and global markets.



HABALIKATHI, BHITARKANIKA

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