



# ENVIS CENTRE SIKKIM *On* ECOTOURISM

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Newsletter

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## STATE CELEBRATES FIRST SIKKIM ORGANIC DAY



**18<sup>th</sup> January, 2017:** Today, Sikkim Organic Day, 2017 was observed at Saramsa Gardens. The day marks Sikkim being declared as the first Organic State in India by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi last year. The hon'ble Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling in his speech was hopeful that organic farming will be practised by the Sikkimese people in all generations to come.

He spoke on the importance of organic farming and how it could be a rewarding profession. This kind of farming also leads to healthy soil, good health and healthy environment. Being totally organic does not only make farming an attractive profession, but also gives a clear message to the world that organic farming and chemical free agriculture is the only way to healthy

living. He also urged the educated youth of the State to pro-actively take up this new age profession and help in promoting the brand name of Sikkim Organic. He pointed out that the farming community of Sikkim can only benefit from Sikkim being an Organic State if we produce organic products sufficiently and also export them out of the State.

The Chief Minister urged the officials of Agriculture and Horticulture Department to bring awareness amongst the Sikkimese people on organic farming and to encourage and motivate the farming community of the State.

Lastly he also presented prizes to the winners under various categories of best vegetable cultivators of the State including presentation of Progressive

Farmers' Special Awards. All in all the Chief Minister was pleased to distribute tokens of Krishi Loan to the farmers of the State. He thanked everyone who participated and contributed to make Sikkim a beautiful and organic state.





# 10 STATES THAT ARE PROMOTING ECOTOURISM IN INDIA

*10 States That Are Promoting Ecotourism in India & Encouraging Responsible Travel  
Eco Sensitive Zones in India boast of geographical diversities and lovely tourist places that  
have been or are rapidly becoming popular getaways in India!*

## 10. Ladakh – Traveling to the Himalayas done right.



The Himalayas have been on top of every traveler's bucket list and therefore left gasping for breath in recent times. Now that tourism has found a foothold in Trans - Himalayan

region and most of the places have been glorified, ecotourism is penetrating to encourage sustainable travel and extensive tours.

Leh Nutrition Project, established by Save The Children Fund (UK) in 1979, happens to be the NGO working towards the overall upliftment in Ladakh. They have been addressing issues related to child care, development, education, livelihood, and watershed development in the difficult terrains. In addition to that, Leh Nutrition Project and Ladakh Ecological Development Group have been actively working to promote the sustainable society in Ladakh.

Attractions for eco-travelers in Ladakh: Hemis National Park, Tsomoriri Wetland Conservation Reserve, ancient monasteries, treks spanning across villages, chance to experience the life in the valley.

Eco-friendly stays in Ladakh: Eco Popular Resort in Leh, Himalayan Eco Resort in Leh, and homestays in Leh.

## 9. Himachal Pradesh – Responsible travel in the highlands

The mountainous landform of Himachal, bordering Tibet and Jammu & Kashmir, has rich biodiversity, which attracts a large number of tourists every year. As a result, popular holiday destinations in Himachal are suffering due to excessive commercialization.

The Ecotourism Society in Himachal has been practicing Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET), which is a collaborated effort towards the conservation of nature and cultural resources in the region. Various approaches like Participatory Forestry Management for the development of forests have been initiated. The efforts have been widely appreciated by the people of Himachal as well as tourists. Besides, they've generated a lot of revenue for the state.

A huge credit for promoting ecotourism in Himachal also goes to Ecosphere - an



organization that focuses on initiatives for saving the rich bio-reserve, keeping the environment sound, and making lesser known places more popular. Attractions for eco-travelers in Himachal Pradesh: Great Himalayan National Park, Pin Valley National Park,

Chandratal, 3300 plus varieties of flora, the indigenous tribes of the region Eco-friendly stays in Himachal Pradesh: Oakwood Hamlet in Shimla, The Himalayan Village in Kullu, and Homestays in Spiti Valley.



## 8. Delhi – Good vibes straight from the national capital



New Delhi has seen a commendable effort from organizations like Ecotourism Society of India that have been encouraging sustainable practices in the capital. From

minimizing carbon footprint to creating awareness and further collaborating with like-minded bodies to promote eco-tourism, they have come a long way.

Resources have also been fuelled towards identifying new ecotourism destinations and making them popular. For example, Chhawla-Kanganheri - an ecotourism park near Najafgarh drain has been revamped and recreational activities like boating, camping, paintball and obstacle course are available for the entertainment of tourists. Farmstays also have a major role in the promotion of ecotourism; a few have come up in the heart of the city, besides many in the outskirts.

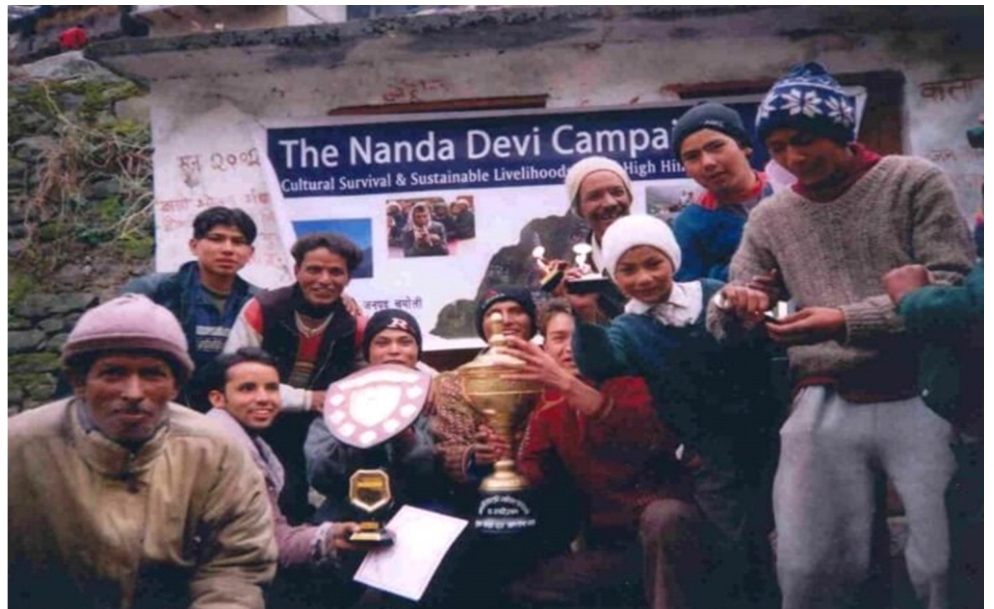
Attractions for eco-travelers in Delhi: JNU Caves, Yamuna Biodiversity Park, The Ridge, and The Yamuna.

Eco-friendly stays in Delhi: Surjivan Resort, Thakran Farm, and Uppal's Orchid

## 7. Uttarakhand – Cascading from the Garhwal Himalayas

To make travelers aware of the diverse culture and surroundings, several village treks have been initiated by the tourism department of Uttarakhand. These trails give an insight into the lives of Kumaoni villagers. It is a collective effort from Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, Garhwal-Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam, and ecotourism division of the state forest department and has seen the successful execution of eco-tours, which has taken adventure tourism to new heights. The organizations also run homestays in the area by providing essentials and required finances to the homeowners to operate efficiently.

State Bird Spring Festival organized by forest department has experienced a tremendous growth over the years and has been a boost to the tourism. Communities like Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve - a tiger conservation reserve in Ramnagar has



been highly benefitted because of all the eco-friendly initiatives taken at places in Uttarakhand.

Attractions for eco-travelers in Uttarakhand: Valley of Flowers, and

Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve

Eco-friendly stays in Uttarakhand: Emerald Trail, camps and eco lodges in Jayalgarh, Auli, and Ghangaria.

## 6. Arunachal Pradesh – Crown of the Northeast

Arunachal Pradesh is one of the prized jewels of the Northeast India. It boasts of diverse topography and unexplored terrains, which make it a popular destination for ecotourism in India.

Organizations like Future Generations Arunachal and Green Pastures have been focussing on projects to impart awareness on ecotourism and encourage homestays in the region.

Also, institutions like Ngunu Ziro by Future Generation Arunachal have been contributing towards the cause of preservation of tribal culture and safeguarding the nature around.





Apatani Plateau Initiative, Ziro and Tangsa Community Conservation Reserve Initiative, Changlang District

have been major initiatives executed by Association for Conservation and Tourism in the state. They aim at the

sole motive of creating a friendly environment for tribals and making conserving the pristine environment.

Further, game viewing at wildlife sanctuaries, climbing, trekking and nature walk in the valleys and splendid sightseeing make Arunachal Pradesh an ideal place for ecotourism.

Attractions for eco-travelers in Arunachal Pradesh: Namdapha National Park, Tsanga Community Conservation Reserve, and Apatani Plateau.

Eco-friendly stays in Arunachal Pradesh: Homestays in Ziro run by an NGO called Ngunu Ziro, homestays at Bagun Welfare Society in Thembang, responsible guesthouse in Namdapha National Park run by an NGO called SEACOW.

### 5. Meghalaya – Into the abode of clouds

This unexplored paradise in the northeast has a lot of cultural diversity and plenty of secluded wonders. Living Roots Ecotourism Society has unearthed a hidden treasure in the northeast and glorified Nongblai - a lesser-known village in the East Khasi Hills district. The village has record 16 living root bridges. Raid Nongblai - a collective organization of Nongblai, Suthim, and Wahlyngkhat villages have jointly taken up the responsibilities of these living root bridges that are like a god to them.

Regional Workshop on Environmental Service Learning, conservation of Hotspots of Biodiversity and Ecotourism that focusses on biodiversity conservation and ecotourism. Moreover, the exciting village tours and untarnished natural beauty has a raw appeal for every



aspiring traveler.

Attractions for eco-travelers in Meghalaya: Mawlynnong Village, Mawphlang Sacred Forest, East Khasi Hills, and Jakrem Hot Spring.

Eco-friendly stays in Meghalaya: Ecotourism homestays with the Khasi tribe in Mawlynnong, NG Eco Homestay in Cherrapunjee, and Ri Kynjai Eco-resort in Shillong.

### 4. Assam – Of secluded environs and national parks

Remote places, tribes, and their exciting traditions make Assam an exciting destination for ecotourism in India. People, over the years, have shown acceptance to responsible travel and now workshops are conducted at different places.

Understanding the need of the hour, Ecotourism Society of India in partnership with Assam Tourism has been organizing workshops to promote responsible tourism. Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) has also been keen on supporting initiatives by setting up eco-camps all

managed by deprived youths in the region. These camps, mostly frequented by the foreigners and backpackers are a huge boost to the tourism.

Attractions for eco-travelers in Assam: Kaziranga National Park, Manas



National Park, and The Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary.

Eco-friendly stays in Assam: The Singpho Eco Lodge at Margherita-Pengari road, Faneng Village at Lekhapani, The Nature Hunt Eco Camp at Kaziranga National Park, and Chandubi Jungle Camp at Chandubi Lake.



### 3. Sikkim – Taking Indian tourism by to another level



In the lap of the Himalayas, Sikkim experiences large number of footfall; especially honeymooners! People who

turn out to be ignorant while making memories end up spilling garbage at random thus affecting the nature.

To save the beautiful environment of the northeast, sustainable tourism and eco-friendly measures have been devised by Directorate of Ecotourism in association with Forest Department of Sikkim. In this region, promotion of wildlife and nature has remained a prime focus.

GoingWild is another responsible organization in the northeast working towards the development of ecotourism by promoting several wildlife and birding tours.

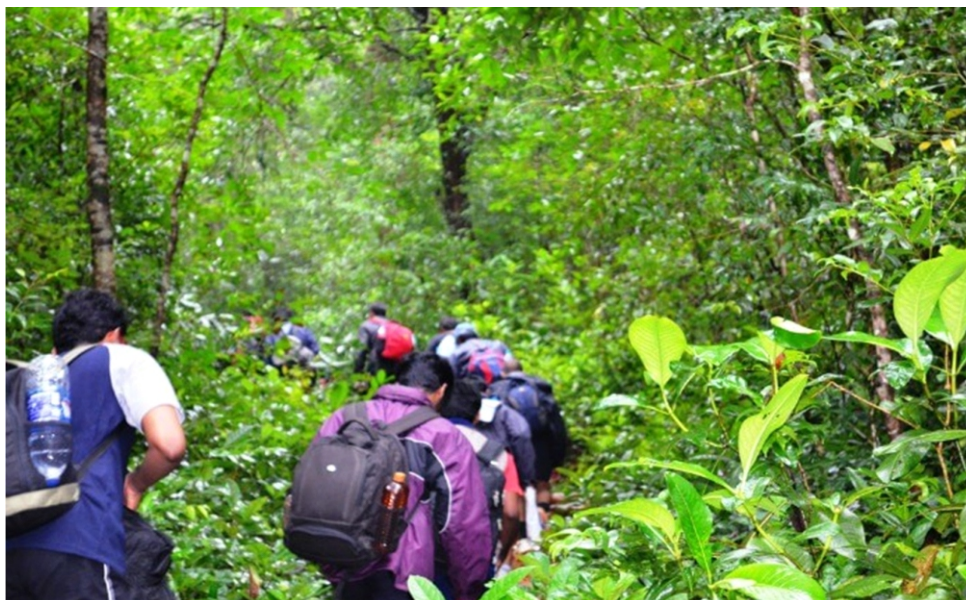
Attractions for eco-travelers in Sikkim: Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary, and Khangchendzonga National Park.

Eco-friendly stays in Sikkim: Teen Taley Garden Resorts in Rumtek, Eco Paradise Resort & Spa in Gangtok, and Cherry Village Resort in Pelling.

### 2. Karnataka – Of rainforest, wildlife, nature, and adventures

There couldn't be anything more exciting than taking up eco-trails, walking through the valley, and spending moments camping in the dense rainforests of Western Ghats. The vastness of nature in the Ghats has treasured ecological diversity, which needs to be explored and brought into the people's knowledge.

Jungle lodges, heritage sites, and resorts make Karnataka a popular ecotourism destination in the country. For all the rush and visitors that come down to visit the city, Karnataka Ecotourism Development Board (KEDB) and National Tiger Conservation authority have collectively rolled out policies aimed at attracting more investment, creating more





awareness at the tourist hotspots, and facilitating ambitious activities to attract tourists.

Attractions for eco-travelers in

Karnataka: Bisle Rainforest, Nagarhole, Kabini Backwaters, Hassan, Chikmagalur, and Devbagh near Karwar.

Eco-friendly stays in Karnataka: Jhari Ecostay, Silver Oak Resort, and Chukki Mane.

## 1. Kerala – There in the foothills of Western Ghats



From being the first place to execute planned ecotourism in India to treating the visitors with warmth, Kerala - in the heart of the Western Ghats, is a popular sojourn for nature lovers. The Ghats are counted among the top 18 biodiversity hotspots in the world and

boast of quite a few endangered wildlife species.

Hill stations, plantations, backwaters, and the unique biological settings of Kerala make it a perfect ecotourism destination. The infinite gardens and

tea estates are perfect for nature walk and treks. Thenmala Ecotourism Project is a prominent development in the South India that works towards the development of Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary Reservoir and Deer Rehabilitation Center. The sanctuary offers a number of leisure and adventure zone for tourists.

Center for Ecotourism of Kerala Institute of Tourism and Travel Studies has been promoting sustainable tourism by organizing seminars and community service in the area.

Attractions for eco-travelers in Kerala: Thenmala, Konni, Parambikulam, Aralam, Silent Valley National Park, and Periyar Tiger Reserve.

Eco-friendly stays in Kerala: Wild Elephant Eco-Friendly Resort, Ela Ecoland, Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary Reservoir, and Hinterland Village.

# WHEN POACHERS BECAME TOURIST GUIDES

Poaching is the illegal removal of natural resources. That may sound quite simple. However, it can be a very complex issue. Poaching is undertaken by a variety of different people for a variety of reasons, and must be understood within a cultural context. Poaching can include the illegal removal from an ecosystem of: wild animals, wood, minerals, sand, water, plants - in fact the removal of any element of the natural ecosystem in contravention of local laws.

Fighting poaching is not just a process of arresting poachers; it must be combined with a broad effort to motivate people towards a more positive relationship with the natural environment, for the benefit of both human and ecosystem health. This is

underpinned by educating the human communities that produce the poachers, as well as the communities that consume the goods illegally obtained by poachers, as to the damage they cause to the local and global environment.

With the above in mind we should first endeavour to understand why natural resources extraction is and should be allowed or disallowed by the law of the state, or by any individual or organization that has authority over natural resources.

## 1. Environmental Reasons for Protecting Ecosystems

Natural ecosystems form the basis for all life on earth. The species that live in, and rely on, those ecosystems

create a complex web of interactions meaning that each species is reliant on many others for their survival. Our own existence clings to the fragile towers made up of the myriad of different life forms with which we share the planet and the ecosystem services that functioning ecosystems provide. By destroying individual species, or changing the numbers of a species, we change their impact on their ecosystems and we will eventually cause the towers to crumble and topple, bringing others down in the process. As we are intertwined with these ecosystems we will in the process destroy ourselves. For anyone to believe that humans can exist without healthy natural areas is stupid beyond belief.

We must protect the biodiversity and health of our natural environment for our own well-being. That said we cannot expect man to return all areas to nature, but we can and must ensure that what natural treasures still exist are protected and maintained in a healthy state. This is why governments and other organizations create protected areas; they are intended to ensure the survival of important ecosystems and their components for perpetuity.

## 2. Economic Reasons for Protecting Wildlife

It is a mistake to argue that the continued existence of natural ecosystems should be dependent on their ability to generate income for the states and communities where they are found. We need them whether they generate money for us or not; for carbon sequestration, water purification, waste disposal, nutrient cycling and genetic resources, amongst other ecosystem services on which we rely.

However, there are significant economic benefits to doing so. Well-managed wildlife areas generate income and jobs for the state, private enterprise, and for local communities through both consumptive and non-consumptive use.

## 3. Altruistic Reasons for Protecting Wildlife

Quite simply, we should protect it because it is beautiful, it is fascinating, it is our heritage, it provides us with enjoyment, spiritual fulfilment, or any other reason that compels us.

Very often any of these sentiments can be found enshrined in law. Although this may not be a strong reason to deter poachers from poaching, it can be a sentiment from which funds for anti-poaching and voluntary assistance can be generated. It often can and does not only lead to the protection of wild areas and ecosystems but also ensures that they are cared for and managed.

**The Objective of Anti-Poaching:** The objective of anti-poaching should always be first and foremost the prevention of poaching. Prevention is achieved in the following ways;



*Images from the Periyar Tiger Reserve of the tourist activities undertaken by the rehabilitated poachers.*

through education, through dealing with socio-economic factors that encourage poaching, by stopping people from actually poaching and lastly, through deterrence. Education and deterrence both come before apprehension or interdiction or the actual protection of wildlife on the ground, although these last elements may be part of the reason for deterrence. Actual arrest operations are less likely to be necessary if a combination of powerful deterrent, awareness and education exists.

This manual primarily deals with stopping poaching on the ground and deterring poaching. However, the necessity of education and awareness as well as other factors are always intertwined with these objectives. For example a crucial part of operations, pro-active investigation, is dependent on good relations with the community, which in turn is usually a result of educating the community about the benefits and importance of protecting wildlife and wild areas, and by raising levels of awareness within those communities of poaching problems being experienced. This education and raising of awareness leads to the cooperation that allows for good pro-active investigation whereby even unpaid informants provide information on poaching-related activity.

But what if we can rehabilitate these encroachers of the natural ecosystem

to do something which will possibly benefit themselves as well as the environment. The question now arises what would a poacher do when he has hung up his boots and surrendered his guns?

The best possible example which can be cited is at the Periyar Tiger Reserve located along the Tamil Nadu-Kerala border, where such individuals don a government uniform and lead tourists and adventure-seekers into the very forests where he once hunted animals for their furs, skins and body parts. In an experimental scheme that has boosted the anti-poaching campaign in the two southern states and helped curb the smuggling of animal skins and parts, a group of 40 former poachers has been roped in by the state governments by offering them jobs as tourist guides and patrol personnel.

The scheme got off to a wobbly start in 1998 as Periyar officials had reservations about letting hardened poachers, some with many cases pending against them, into the core areas of the reserve where protected animals and forest products like sandalwood and cinnamon are found.

But after one-and-half years of monitoring and psychological training, the former poachers have turned out to be the best intelligence agents working in sync with the state police as they



know the whereabouts of smugglers and how their rings work. Twenty-one reformed poachers were trained under an eco-tourism development programme on the Kerala side of the tiger reserve, and 20 more are undergoing similar training in Tamil Nadu after the success of the first phase of the project. Their salaries vary from Rs 2,000 to Rs 4,000 a month, depending on the type of work they do. Pending cases against most of them have been dropped by the states and they are allowed to maintain their own separate businesses. The poachers are allowed to take groups of five tourists, along with armed guards, into the eight to 10 sq km of area within the reserve open to the public. Most of the core regions where tigers breed are out-of-bounds to anyone other than Periyar officials. At night, the former poachers join 'jungle patrols' along with forest guards and trek through the reserve to curb the hunting of animals and smuggling of forest products.

The anti-poaching efforts taken by such rehabilitated poachers are broken down very simply into:

1. Proactive information gathering to understand the nature of the poaching threat;
2. Reactive information gathering on specific poaching activities;
3. Deployments - these are putting the right teams of competent people into the field based on application of

information gathering and understanding;

4. Tracking - the use of 'bush-craft' to locate and track poachers from the smallest sign of their presence;
5. Pursuit & Apprehension - the skills of tracking and apprehension teams combine to pursue and capture poachers;
6. Reactive information gathering following apprehension;
7. Prosecution - we can catch all the poachers in the world, but if we cannot successfully prosecute them then we are but an irritant to their business;
8. Preventing and deterring poaching in the first place by using their past experience.



*'Thaaddikkannan' is a dynamic and committed forest watcher who spent 36 years in forest to protect Mother Nature. Kannan is able to predict the correct time and appearance of each animal in Periyar Reserve. He has played a vital role in anti-poaching activities which makes him an important asset to the tiger reserve. He is also a recipient of many state and national awards.*

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#### **Invitation for Article / Research paper**

Dear Readers,

Research papers / Articles related to ecotourism, climate change & mitigation are invited for free publication in the ENVIS newsletter. The same will be uploaded in the ENVIS website with due courtesy of the author.

#### **Terms and conditions for publication:**

- The article should not be published anywhere.
- Closely related with ecotourism related subjects or climate change.
- Full paper with abstract notes.
- 650 to 700 words in English language.
- High resolution pictures (3,4 nos.) of the topic.

**Note:** Publication of the research paper/ article will be decided by the editorial board of the Newsletter.

Please send your valuable suggestions, queries, comments and articles to:

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This newsletter is aimed at disseminating ecotourism information and its related subjects among, environment enthusiasts, ecotourism stakeholders, students, researchers and public at large.

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