

Okharey Ecotourism Carnival

October 17-19, 2015 | West Sikkim

An Initiative of Directorate of Ecotourism, FEWMD
PROMOTED UNDER SBFP-JICA



A Report on Okharey Ecotourism Carnival Conserving Natural and Cultural Heritage of Sikkim

Report Source:

Directorate of Ecotourism, FEWMD

Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management Department, Government of Sikkim is undertaking the JICA assisted Sikkim Biodiversity Conservation and Forest Management Project (SBFP). The main focal areas of the project include Biodiversity Conservation, Ecotourism and Joint Forest Management. The Directorate of Ecotourism under the project aims at the development and promotion of Ecotourism in the State for which 11 zones have been identified.

The Directorate of Ecotourism recognizes the need for organizing festivals and fairs as an effective mode of promoting ecotourism in the State.

Okharey, West Sikkim being the second zone among the 11 zones has accomplished the final product and package designing and development. The opening of Okharey zone was done by organizing a three days Ecotourism carnival by involving the entire community of the zone under the Directorate of Ecotourism from 17th-19th October, 2015.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ECOTOURISM FESTIVAL IN OKHAREY:

- To create wider awareness about the ecotourism initiative in Okharey among local stakeholders-community members, government departments, officials, panchayats, etc.

- To facilitate in bringing all relevant stakeholders into a single platform.
- To generate awareness about conservation among school children.
- To attain much-needed publicity about the ecotourism initiative among Sikkimese as well as others.
- To gain attention from the tourism market about the ecotourism products/ packages available in the zone.
- To instill confidence among the ecotourism stakeholders and to provide an opportunity to local people to display their talents, artifacts, etc.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

Local, National and International tourists; Delegates from International Tourism Mart; Officials from various departments; Schools; Media; Other line Departments; Tourism Industry; Eco-tourists; Other institutions.

The opening of the carnival was held on 17th of October, 2015 and the Chief Guest for the occasion was the Hon'ble Minister of Forests, Environment & Wildlife Management Department. Invitation of the festival was also sent out to many officers from other departments who witnessed the opening of the carnival.

The carnival included many activities both nature based and culture based activities. After the carnival procession the guests were able to experience many activities such as Singhi dance, cultural dance, local cuisine, visit to the local monastery, visit to interpretation centre, visit to local handicraft stalls, etc.

The Chief Guest along-with several officers from the Department also shared their views about the Ecotourism zone at the culture ground. The carnival was declared open by the chief guest to the guests.



Singhi dance during the carnival procession welcoming the guest

Activities during the festival:

- **Singhi Dance:** One of the main highlight of this carnival was the Singhi Dance. Costumes were specifically bought from Nepal for this purpose and training on singhi dance was given to seven stakeholders from Okharey.
- **Horse riding activity:** Horse riding was another unique activity that was introduced during the carnival. A total of five horses were hired for this three day long carnival.
- **Mountain biking:** Five mountain bikes were also hired for the carnival. Visitors had to pay a certain amount for hiring the bikes.
- **Night safari:** Two gypsy vehicles were hired for taking the visitors through the sanctuary on a night safari. The visitors who were interested in this activity had an opportunity to sight some of the local animals found inside the sanctuary. This activity had two different slots for the visitor's convenience. One trip started at 6 PM and the other one at 8 PM. A total of four visitors could be accommodated in a single vehicle so visitors had to make an advance booking for this activity.
- **Night scouting:** Night scouting like night safari also had two slots. Visitors were taken on foot through the nearby forest by trained guides. In this activity the visitors had an opportunity to see the wildlife which included both flora and fauna.
- **Lamasing trek:** This four hour long trek was enjoyed by many nature enthusiasts during the carnival. Several stakeholders from the village were given training on basic trekking guiding for this purpose.
- **Cultural program:** A separate culture ground was also established for the carnival. Guests and locals were able to enjoy and experience cultural program of different local ethnicities.
- **Interpretation centre:** an interpretation centre was also set up during the carnival showcasing all the local artifacts of the Sherpa culture. Visitors were able to learn a lot about the Sherpa culture during the carnival.





Tourist enjoying local cuisine



Interpretation Centre



Night Scouting



Sikkim Forest officials with ECOMOS and IUCN team at Dzongri area (KNP) on 6th October 2015

CONCLUSION

- Through this three days carnival the team was able to showcase the local Sherpa culture and was also successful in introducing the zone to the market.
- Students who participated in this festival were all given certificate of participation.
- All the volunteers were also given certificate of participation.
- NGO's and other partner organizations were handed out certificate of appreciation for their involvement.
- The carnival created a platform for both Sikkimese people and tourists to learn and acquire knowledge about Sikkim's nature and culture and also about the concept of ecotourism.

- Installation of effective signposts and natural interpretation.
- The carnival provided a prospect for learning the value of coordination, team work and developing an understanding between the Forest officials and the stakeholders which in turn will result in a better forest management.

ABOUT OKHAREY

With Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary on its forest fringes, Okharey is blessed with countless flora and fauna. The presence of unique tribe "Sherpas" and the pleasant hospitality of the community will beyond doubt make your visit an extra admirable one. Though the reach is exhausting, the true hospitality and love of the local community and the incredible nature of Okharey will make your visit memorable and worthy.

You can experience



HORSE RIDING



NIGHT SCOUTING



NIGHT SAFARI



TREKKING



MOUNTAIN BIKING



TRADITIONAL FOOD



MEDITATION / INTERPRETATION CENTER



CULTURE PROGRAMME

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