



# Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge Chitwan National Park, Nepal



*The lodge has been built in the traditional long-house vernacular style.*

Tiger Tops laid out the framework for sustainable and inclusive tourism in the sub-continent almost six decades ago – and still holds on to the same values. The Tharu Lodge, built in 1980, sets the bar for old-charm hospitality, low environmental impact and long-term support for conservation and social development in the area.

Drawing inspiration from the fast-disappearing longhouse style of local *Tharu* architecture, the lodge was built by village craftsmen using locally-sourced materials. An ethos of cultural sensitivity underpins the lodge's operations from interior design to opportunities for guests to interact with local communities. Spread over 25 acres and occupying only 10-12% of the property, the lodge sits in a swathe of verdant landscape replanted with indigenous trees, shrubs and grasses.



*Local recruitment includes women.*

Staff recruitment favours local communities, especially disadvantaged groups and women with provision made for training and skills development. As much as 99% of their staff are from the local Nepalese area, including in management positions, bringing new skills and economic benefits to the area. Their staff retention is such that their longest-serving employee recently completed 50 years of service, and they have hired from the fourth generation of loyal staff families!

The lodge's broader programme for community support is designed to address local needs. Particularly notable is their co-funded Tiger Tops Swiss Air Pre School that provides a free head-start for children from disadvantaged families along with daily meals, nutritional and medical support. The lodge also covers teachers' salaries in community schools with the support of guests. A Tharu Lodge Village Clinic has provided free treatment and 24/7 assistance for medical emergencies.



*School library at Tiger Tops Swiss Air Pre School.*

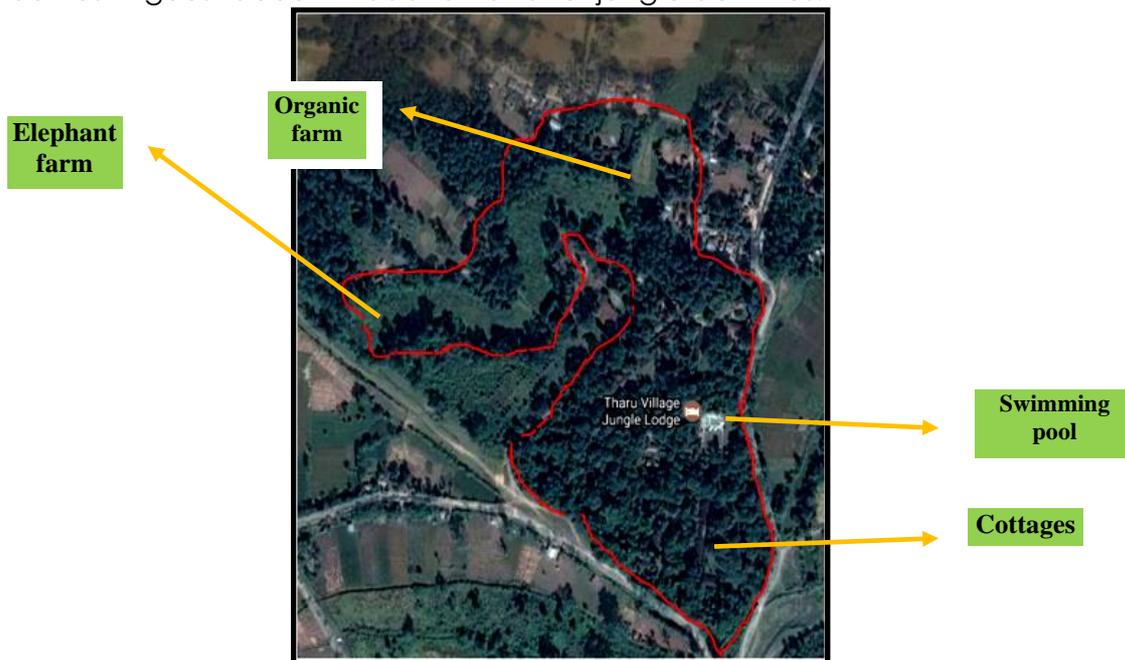
The lodge's seven naturalists provide a hub of nature expertise - enhancing guest experiences, running student wildlife workshops and community training besides playing a vital role in monitoring and conservation.



*The Jatayu Vulture Restaurant initiative has led to a 150% increase in vulture populations in the buffer zone.*

The team works closely with forest department officials on anti-poaching and animal census initiatives. The Tiger Tops Long Term Tiger Monitoring Project, launched in 1980, has resulted in the collection of the largest set of data to-date on tiger ecology, territorial dynamics, turnover, reproduction and tiger survival. The lodge's association with the Jatayu Vulture Restaurant initiative, brainchild of lodge manager D.B. Chaudhary, has played a key role in the government's Vulture Conservation Action Plan for Nepal which is helping to save eight endangered species of vulture and has led to a 150% increase in vulture populations in the buffer zone over a three-year period. The lodge is also leading the way in elephant welfare management in Nepal.

The lodge's sound ecological practice includes waste segregation and recycling through a local scrap merchant, solar power for hot water, energy and water conservation measures and a substantial organic farm providing food for the kitchen supplemented by locally purchased produce. The lodge has removed all single use plastics and is using steel bottles in guest accommodation and for jungle activities.



*Indigenous planting for wildlife and water conservation; buildings occupy only 10-12% of the 25-acre site*

## More examples of good practice



Built in traditional style with local materials, skills and decoration to preserve local heritage. The structure is made from local Sal wood with a tile roof. The walls are built from reeds, mud and dung, serving as a natural antiseptic to keep pests out.



Room design exploits natural light and air circulation, reducing the need for daytime energy use.



Local cuisine is provided for guests.



Pathways are made from natural material to allow rainwater to percolate into the ground.



Common and scientific naming of trees is in place.



A substantial on-site organic farm contributes to daily kitchen needs. Local villagers are trained in organic farming practices. Local produce is used to the maximum possible extent.



Dairy products are sourced from the lodge's dairy.



Mats hand-printed by a local women's group are sold in the Tharu Lodge shop. The women benefit directly from the income generated, while a portion of the sales goes back into the Community Development Fund.



Domestic elephants are allowed to roam freely and follow their normal routines.



Lodge staff participating in the Asian Wildfowl Census.



Figure 1 Dhan Bahadur Tamang, recipient of the TOFTigers Wildlife Tourism Award for Lodge Naturalist of the Year 2016, has expert knowledge of tiger populations through his field research – one of seven naturalists at the lodge. In October, it will be his 50th y



Facilitating bird watching and other nature activities.



Conservation briefing for college students.



Briefing to the buffer zone community on conservation and eco-tourism.



Camera trapping since 1995 has been helping to record animal movements.



Jatayu Vulture Restaurant, a community-managed vulture restoration project, was the brainchild of the lodge manager.



Community-based anti-poaching group at Jatayu Vulture Restaurant.



The clearance of invasive plant species on land surrounding Jatayu Vulture Restaurant has seen the population of critically-endangered Bengal Floricans increase.



A health clinic at the lodge provided free medicine and treatment by trained Community Medical Assistance available 24/7 for medical emergencies. This is now offered when guest or partnership funds are available.



A pre-school founded and funded by Tiger Tops and Swissair Staff is providing a free start for children from disadvantaged families – part of a broader programme of social support.



All students/staff are given annual eye check-ups at Tiger Tops Swissair School.



Solar power is used for guest hot water and elephant fencing.



LED lighting is used in the majority of places to reduce energy consumption; rooms have no TV. LPG is used as fuel for cooking instead of wood.



Bicycles for nature rides are provided to enhance guest experience and reduce carbon footprint



Hand carts are used for guest luggage.



Bullock carts are used for local transport to reduce carbon footprint.



A piggery and bio-gas plant manage biodegradable waste; recyclable waste is segregated and appropriate materials are given to a local scrap merchant. The lodge has removed all single use plastics and uses steel bottles.



*Biogas provides fuel for cooking at the school.*



*Village clean-up with staff and guests.*



*Guests are encouraged to conserve water; a reverse osmosis purifier is used; reusable water bottles are provided. Aerated water taps, low-flow showerheads and dual-flush systems are used to conserve water.*

## **More about community support**

### **Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge, Nepal - Addressing Local Need**



*Classroom cheer at the Tiger Tops Swiss Air Pre School.*

children on the weekends for reading, art, music and drama programmes.

In return for free education, the pupils' parents work in the school's organic vegetable garden for fixed hours in a month growing vegetables for school meals. The school has a buffalo which provides milk and dung to power the school's biogas unit for cooking. Funds provided by the International Trust for Nature Conservation have enabled students to start a tree nursery, an income stream for the school as well as giving the children a positive conservation experience. The school's 'Snowball' goat-breeding project provides an income source for children's families – pupils' mothers passing on a kid to another family when their goat breeds - multiplying the benefit and bringing the community closer.

Since 1999, Tharu Lodge has also secured teachers' salaries in community schools thanks to the generosity of guests and donors. In addition, their Duff Kennedy Scholarship programme has funded Government school education for more than 200 children from poor families.



*Children making the most of the library at TTSA school.*

Tiger Tops in Nepal has played a leading role in supporting and empowering local communities since its inception in the '60s with its Tharu Lodge bringing significant benefits in health, education and overall social development. Its Tiger Tops Swiss Air (TTSA) Pre School founded in 1996 gives a free head-start to children from local disadvantaged families with funding provided for their continuing education at government schools. In addition to schooling, the project provides two meals a day, uniforms, books, school supplies, immunisations and healthcare with a doctor keeping a close check on the students' health and nutritional needs. The school's reach is extended

by keeping the school library open to all village



*A free eye check-up organised by Team Tiger Tops.*

Tharu Lodge's broader support has included technical and financial aid for local women's self-help groups and youth clubs, training and traditional handicraft revival programmes. It has installed hand-pumps to supply clean drinking water to villagers. Its Village Clinic for Locals has provided free medicine and treatment sessions by trained Community Medical Assistance (CMA) who are available 24/7 for medical emergencies, an ambulance service and a medical fund for villagers facing expensive treatments. Annual eye and health camps have also been organised.

## More about nature conservation

# Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge, Nepal – More Than 50 Years of Giving Back to Nature

Besides adhering to rigorous environmental standards in its own operations, the Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge, which has been operational since 1980 in Nepal's Chitwan National Park, extends their support to a range of local conservation efforts.



*Jatayu Vulture Restaurant is located in Kawasoti Nawalparasi district along the buffer zone of Nepal's Chitwan National Park.*

The Jatayu Vulture Restaurant in Kawasoti Nawalparasi district along the buffer zone of Chitwan National Park is worth a special mention. The brainchild of D.B. Chaudhary, manager at the Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge, this community-managed vulture restoration project has helped revive populations of eight endangered vulture species leading to a 150% increase in their buffer zone populations and a 200% increase in nesting. This unique vulture feeding

centre provides multi-faceted benefits: rescue and care for old cattle, supply of a non-toxic food source to vultures and provides village income from home stays, guiding etc.

To free low-income families of the burden of caring for ailing cattle, the initiative buys unproductive cattle from surrounding villages at 250 NRS a piece and keeps them at a hospice for at least seven days to ensure they are free of diclofenac, a veterinary product toxic to vultures. When the cattle die naturally, the carcass is fed to the vultures at the restaurant.

The restaurant is being promoted as an eco-tourism initiative creating local jobs and spreading conservation awareness through a Community Learning Centre. The clearance of invasive plant species on surrounding land has seen



*Conservation of surrounding wetland.*

the population of critically-endangered Bengal Floricans increase. Conservation of surrounding wetland and grassland and their wild inhabitants including deer, rhino, birds and many herbivores is also underway.

Seven in-house naturalists enable the lodge to act as a centre of nature excellence for visiting guests, educational groups, the surrounding community and conservation initiatives.



*Tiger Tops staff taking part in the Asia waterfowl census count.*

The Tiger Tops Long Term Tiger Monitoring Project, launched in 1980 and funded by ITNC, FFNC and the Nepal Tiger Trust, has resulted in the collection of the largest set of data to-date on tiger ecology, territorial dynamics, turnover, reproduction and tiger survival. The Smithsonian Institution's long-term tiger monitoring project used Tiger Tops' trackers to pioneer the use of camera-trapping. Camera-trapping has been ongoing since 1995 and has helped to inform official tiger protection strategies.



*Tiger photographed on camera trap.*

Tiger Tops provides the salaries of two buffer zone guards in Chitwan working closely with local authorities on anti-poaching activities. They lend cars, boats, and manpower for patrols and wildlife monitoring and provide logistical support for the annual Asian Waterfowl Census January counts.



*Elephants are not used for safaris at the Tharu Lodge. Housed in five spacious enclosures, they are allowed to follow their own routines.*

Tiger Tops has pioneered elephant welfare projects, and is setting an example on how to ethically treat captive elephants. At their Tharu Lodge Camp, resident elephants are kept free of chains in five large enclosures and are not used for safaris. These twelve elephants now follow their own routines, and have formed their own natural groupings. Guests are given a chance to observe these animals, interact with their mahouts, and learn from their experiences.

The Tiger Tops Swiss Air School Tree Nursery Project helps children imbibe lessons on responsibility for their natural resources. Tree seedlings are sold to villagers, providing them with alternative sources for fodder, fuel and building materials.



*Students taking part in the TTSA School Tree Nursery Project.*

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