

Kanha Earth Lodge

Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh



Guest cottages reflect local Gond architecture and are built of local materials. Grounds with indigenous planting left wild and natural pathways help to recharge ground water.

Kanha Earth Lodge marries inspiring architecture and rustic charm with conservation through its eco operations and promoting a passion for nature. Located near Narna, a small tribal village, the site was chosen in a new area to offer guests an immersive wildlife experience away from the madding crowd and to spread the benefits of tourism. Underpinned by consultation with the local community, the lodge has been designed to reflect the local vernacular architecture with verandas, pitched roofs and deep overhangs providing natural shade. The sixteen-acre grounds, restored with indigenous trees and grasses, have been left natural with not a single tree lost during construction.

Buildings are constructed of local stone, mud plaster and terracotta tiles together with rough-hewn, recycled and sustainably sourced timber and sited next to trees to provide natural cooling. Roofs are triple layered to trap air to keep interiors cool to help conserve energy. Furniture is hand crafted from waste wood and railway sleepers which combined with the construction, earned the lodge the accolade of winning the All India Stone Architectural Awards in 2010-11.



Rustic eco elegance in the common area - local stone, Gond art and furniture made from waste wood and recycled railway sleepers.

Local villagers involved in the construction have progressed to new positions with a positive programme of skills development and awareness of the company's sustainability ethos woven into training. Young local recruits have become managers inspiring fellow villagers. More than 70% of lodge employees are from the local area. 70% of revenue is pumped back into the local economy through salaries, an active local procurement policy, vehicle hire, park fees and taxes.



Guests enjoying a nature walk with lodge naturalist.

Not resting on their laurels, the lodge's three expert in-house naturalists undergo annual training to continue honing their knowledge and skills. Guests benefit from a range of inspiring experiences accompanied by a naturalist including nature walks, a tree trail, birding, cycling expeditions and Forest Bathing, a Japanese technique harnessing the natural therapeutic power of trees.



Team building, part of the lodge's training and development for staff.

Promoting local culture is part of the mix too, with local cuisine integrated into the dining experience, village visits and a souvenir shop selling Gond art and other local handicrafts. Baiga dance is performed regularly at the lodge and guests can also try their hand at pottery or Gond painting.

The lodge's efforts to be 100% single use plastic free are exemplary alongside other good eco practices such as recycling, composting and the use of solar powered cookers. Guests are given a stainless steel bottle on arrival for filtered water amongst a range of initiatives avoiding plastic.

The lodge sponsors a teacher at the local school and provides support with books and stationery. Pupils are educated about the importance of their natural heritage by the lodge naturalists. Donations are given to three local villages to support festivals and local events. Guests are encouraged to support local projects and conservation.



Not a single tree was cut down during construction and further trees have been planted.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE



The sixteen-acre site's natural habitat has been improved by planting indigenous trees and allowing natural grasses and vegetation to flourish, positive for retaining rainwater and storing carbon. Not a single tree was cut down during construction. 500 trees were planted in 2018.



Buildings are located adjacent to trees to benefit from natural shading. Wide eaves in the local style combined with stone and other local materials help to provide natural cooling. Timber is from recycled or sustainable sources – forests under the Forest Department. Lawns are avoided and vegetation left natural to enable biodiversity to thrive.



The twelve guest cottages are built using traditional techniques, materials and labour inspired by Gond tribal architecture – rubble masonry, local stone, mud walls, locally made tiles and timber. One cottage caters for special needs access. Concrete, a carbon intensive material, is avoided for pathways which instead use sand, pebbles and small stones allowing rainwater to percolate into the ground.



Guest cottage interiors have large windows to maximise natural light and air and are decorated with Gond art and blinds made of natural materials. Mud walls and ceilings reflect traditional Gond architecture.



The common area exploits the use of natural light and air. Furniture is made from waste wood and recycled railway sleepers.



The common room houses a library well stocked with books on the biodiversity of Kanha and Madhya Pradesh. Wildlife film screenings and presentations by the lodge naturalists are regularly made.



The rules and regulations of the park are displayed in the common room and highlighted by lodge naturalists in the briefing before safaris.



Information on Kanha National Park, the lodge's conservation policy (ethos, local employment, construction, waste, plastic, energy and water conservation etc) and a checklist of flora and fauna found in and around the park are provided in all guest rooms.



The lodge has three in-house naturalists. Pictured here is Ashu Khan, who grew up in Mocha, a local village and has expert tracking skills and knowledge about local flora and fauna.



Lodge naturalists are given annual training by experts to expand their knowledge and hone their skills to enhance guest experience.



Training includes new techniques such as Forest Bathing to offer guests new, positive nature experiences.



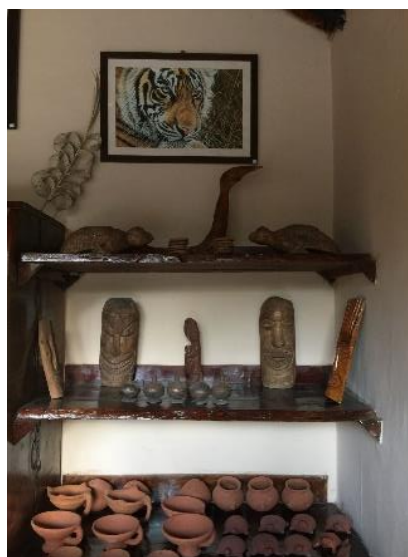
Nature walks, birdwatching and cycling provide low carbon opportunities for guests to explore the surrounding forests accompanied by a naturalist. Longer cycling and camping expeditions between Kanha and Pench Tiger Reserves are also offered.



The lodge has created a Tree Trail in its grounds with local and scientific naming of more than thirty indigenous species and expert briefing provided by the naturalists. A written briefing on tree species is also available for guests.



Local wildlife artist, Mr. Om Prakash Kumawat, is provided with an opportunity to showcase and sell his work at the lodge, opening up a market for his work.



The in-house shop stocks locally made Gond and Baiga handicrafts sourced by NGO Pashu Pakshi.



Guests are offered the opportunity to visit nearby villages and learn about local Gond and Baiga tribes through personal interaction.



The lodge presents Baiga music and dance performances at the lodge.



Local pottery and Gond painting workshops are also offered.



The lodge practices a farm to fork policy with a substantial organic kitchen garden and locally sourced food. Guests can join the team for some gardening therapy whether watering, weeding or picking favourite vegetables for dinner.



Menus are crafted around locally sourced food and include traditional regional dishes giving an insight into local culture. Pictured here, Tikkad Roti a local bread made in tribal homes around Kanha National Park and many parts of Central India, cooked in widely available camel/kachnar leaves over an open fire, a technique learnt by the chefs from local tribes and shared online.



Gond Thali prepared by the chef, Ms. Vijaylaxmi, a Masterchef India participant after sampling local cuisine, attending village haats (markets) to understand local produce and visiting the kitchens of local women to understand local flavours and cooking techniques.



Water conservation notices are displayed in guest rooms encouraging guests to use water sparingly and re-use towels.



Pathways and water pipes are constructed to channel rainwater into a 25 feet deep well. Trees and natural vegetation across the site help to recharge groundwater levels during the rainy season



Dual flush toilets, aerated taps and shower heads are in place to reduce water use.



Water from the staff kitchen goes through a grease trap pictured here. A Balram septic tank treats black water from guest cottages and toilets. Grey water from the kitchen is treated in a separate septic tank.



Swimming pool water is recycled through a filtration unit.



Water is purified using reverse osmosis, the gold standard of water treatment, and available in the restaurant, guest room and at drinking stations.



Guests are given stainless steel flasks on arrival, part of the lodge's 'no to single use plastic' policy, which has saved an estimated 100,000 plastic bottles across Pugdundee Safari's six lodges over four seasons.



Plant based food containers, steel sippers and homemade drinks have replaced shrink and aluminium packaging. Tetrapaks have been done away with completely. Fresh, home grown and locally sourced food is used instead of tinned and exotic food.



Picnics are plastic free.



Herbal biodegradable toiletries are provided in refillable glass bottles.



Bamboo cotton buds and toothbrushes are provided instead of plastic.



Glass containers for guest coffee, tea and sugar have replaced sachets.



Recycled newspaper bags are used instead of plastic.



Solid waste is segregated into degradable and recyclable (tin and glass). E-waste is stored separately. Waste is removed periodically by kabadiwalas. Kitchen waste is segregated into wet and dry waste and appropriate waste composted.



Leaf composting has also been initiated as a further nutrient for the kitchen garden. Compost heaps are fenced to keep out pests.



Guest rooms have a one switch system and notices to save energy, a positive step towards a key linked system. No televisions are provided in the rooms. Almost all the lights in the lodge are now LED, switched from CFL, saving energy and reducing bills.



Rooms use BEE star rated air conditioning and water geysers to save energy.



Solar powered cookers are used combined with the use of LPG, a cleaner fuel than wood.



Regular employee training covers a range of areas including hospitality, first aid (pictured here), teambuilding and skills development. Training for all employees by experts on nature, conservation and eco issues, including, most recently, a seminar by Waste Warriors, is also provided.



The lodge is helping to change local lives through professional development. Pictured here Rohit Patel who joined from the neighbouring village during construction. Now part of the management team and well trained to handle accounts supervision, guest handling, front office and also able to don the hat of a naturalist.



The lodge has a centralised tip box divided equitably between staff. Other benefits include medical insurance, nutritious food and recreational facilities.



The lodge works closely with the Panchayat and other bodies in its local village, Narna. It funds a teacher at the local school and helps with stationery, books and other items. Regular support is also provided for village sports and festival events, temple restoration and other local projects.



The naturalists conduct briefings on nature at the school and the lodge hosts visits by the children with tours of the tree trail and grounds with a naturalist.



The lodge runs a Baadi Project, a small cooperative farming venture, with four families and what they grow is purchased by the lodge. Seeds, technical assistance and supervision are provided by the lodge.



Signage encourages guests to support the local community; visits to the local school or other village projects are also arranged to facilitate this.



Guests are also encouraged to contribute to the Madhya Pradesh Tiger Foundation Society, a conservation not-for-profit.



The lodge displays a food and hygiene policy in the kitchen.



LPG containers are kept outside the kitchen in line with good practice.



Fire fighting equipment is available at appropriate locations.



The lodge has a low noise pollution diesel generator.

Compiled for TOFTigers by [Positive Nature](#) and [Sycom Projects Consultants Pvt Ltd](#), June 2020

Photos © lodges featured, Sycom Projects Consultants Pvt Ltd and photographers listed

For press and publication enquiries contact: admin@toftindia.org

© The TOFTigers Initiative 2021. All rights reserved

The TOFTigers Initiative is a trading enterprise of the Nature Stewardship Alliance, UK Charity No. 1172519 also the TOFTigers India Wildlife Association, a not-for-profit company registered under Section 25 of the Companies Act in India