

Garumara Initiative

The land of wilderness

Using its experience at Pelling, Help Tourism began work at Lataguri - a small village near the Garumara National Park. Lataguri is a destination, once known internationally for its timber industry and wilderness. Today Help Tourism has replaced the dying industry with the community tourism. This was possible with the co-operation of the state forest department. To make the project successful and to establish community tourism activities, Help Tourism began with eight bedded Tourist Hostel by renovating the Jalpaiguri Timber Merchant Association Office on October 9, 1996, as timber industry had to be baptised. Tourists have flowed in from the very first day. Different activities were developed for them. This led to earnings for the locals from tourism.

The success of Lataguri led to formation of the **Garumara Jungle Camp** near Chalsa. It may be interesting to note that at one point of time the site was eastern India's largest timber industry - Madora Woodcrafts Industries. With the Government not encouraging the business of timber in early 1990s to save forest cover, Madora Woodcraft also closed down. Help Tourism took the initiative to transform this dead industry into an ecotourism zone and bring back nature which would have been lost for ever. It has also to an extent brought back economic sustenance for the locals of the nearby village - Mangalbari, who in the past worked for Madora.

Now with Lataguri, Bichabhanga, Mangalbari, Chalsha, Moorty & Kalamati villages making community tourism a squadron around "Garumara National Park" and has been a major support for local nature & culture conservation of the area.

Fact Sheet

This camp is spread over 70 acres with a supporting forest patch and small tea garden. It is a drive of five to ten minutes to the forests from the camp. The forests are a home to a variety of flora and fauna. The rhino, elephant, Indian Bison reign these protected areas. Rivers, hill drives, interesting villages, folk culture and old temples are truly a real time experience here.

Care has been taken to develop the infrastructure of the camp to suit the needs of the tourists. All the abandoned staff quarters have been renovated into 26 double room cottages. Facilities such as restaurant and a "good food kitchen" have been set up. The landscape, has a bio-garden that supplies to the kitchen while the rugged terrain enclosed by a lofty sal forest serves as a natural boundary. The area offers one of the best locations for natural history study and bird watching apart from viewing big animals. Another wildlife sanctuary, Chapramari, is also located nearby.

Within the campus there is also large factory shed with dilapidated machinery. These were once used to make plywood but are today museum showpieces. The factory shed, along with the infrastructure of hospitality offers one of the best locations for large and small film shooting units. Incidentally, feature films were shot on the location by the well known directors Ms. Aparna Sen and later Mr. Goutam Ghosh. The location has also been the happy hunting ground of television film makers such as Anjan Dutta and others. These apart,

“O’Shea’s big adventure” of Discovery fame have been shot in Garumara National Park & Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary using the camp as a base. These sometimes are used by the corporate people for their activities and frequently by retreat seekers.

Glimpses of Garumara Initiative

