

West Sikkim Initiative : Pelling

The nearest motorable viewpoint to Mt. Kanchendzonga

Pelling, the nearest motorable viewpoint to Mt. Kanchendzonga (the third highest peak in the world) is perched high on the top of a ridge (2085 mtrs) between two prominent monasteries. It is the land of eternal purity. This lotus land, offers ample opportunities to individuals to explore its history, nature and the culture of Sikkim.

The process of transforming this small picturesque village into a major tourism destination was initiated by **Help Tourism** with assistance from the then Zilla Adhakshya (District President) of Pelling Mr D. N. Thakarpa, whose ancestors have made significant contributions towards the development of Sikkim.

With tourism increasing, the need to form an association was felt. With initiative of Help Tourism, Pelling Tourism Development Association (PTDA) was set up December 10, 1995, at Sikkim Tourist Centre, Pelling. To help the association to work in the right direction, assistance was sought from ecotourism experts in July, 1996. The association at present is one of the most effective units in West Sikkim and has initiated a number of development programmes.

Uttaray Tourist Village

Picking up from the sensation created at Pelling, S.B Subba, a resident of the small hamlet village of Uttaray situated at a distance of about 30 kms from Pelling enthusiastically converted his house into Uttaray Tourist Centre which is now renamed as Green Valley Resort.

Several 3 to 15 days treks can be organized from here to Yuksom, Hilley, Phoktey Dara, Hangey Pani, Thulodhap, Pokhri and several other locations covering virgin forests of Orchids, Magnolias, Rhododendrons and dozens of high altitude lakes.

Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary in the western most limits of Sikkim bordering Nepal is a flower paradise with supporting flora and fauna diversity. With dense Rhododendron forests intersected by innumerable colors and the imposing Mt.Khangchendzonga at the backdrop-Barsey can truly be called the “**Valley of Flowers**”! **A basic lodge with 20 to 30 pax dormitory accommodation was developed by the government which has been leased out to the local people of Sikkim from time to time. This is presently known as Shambhala Rhododendron Resort.**

To support this initiative a young man from Soreng, Dushan Rai developed his ancestral house into Runchenbung Hamlet Resort. This resort can easily accommodate 10 heads. He has also organized set-up for camping, pony riding etc in the sanctuary. This resort is in the southernmost tip of the sanctuary, just one and a half kms. trek from the bustling village market of Soreng.

These small initiatives at the local level have contributed towards the conservation of the biodiversity of the area and sustainable increase in the local economy. On similar lines a few more efforts were seen at Uttarey, Yuksom, Khacheodpelri in West Sikkim and has become a base for tourists today.

Fact Sheet

Pelling has choice of hotels, from budget to three star. Home stay is also possible. Tashigang hotel is the only good accommodation in Yuksom while Runchenbong Hamlet Resort in Runchenbong has clean family rooms with adjoining bath. Home made food is served to the paying guests. In Barshey Shambala Rhododendron Resort has clean dormitories that can accommodate some 30 visitors. Food is served from the resort's kitchen. In Uttarey Green Valley Resort is the only accommodation having clean rooms with private bath.

Activities/Tours

Monastic tour, Birding, Tantrik Buddhist Tour, Himalayan Jeep Safari, Short and longer treks to Singhalila National Park, Expeditions to Khangchendzonga National Park, Mountain flights.

Access

New Jalpaiguri is the nearest railhead and Bagdogra is the nearest airport. Pelling, Yuksom, Soreng, Uttarey is connected by all weather road from Siliguri/ Gangtok/ Darjeeling/ Kalimpong while to reach Barshey one has to drive upto Hilley and walk 4 kms. or trek from Soreng/ Dentam/ Uttaray.