

Wildlife Tourism & Its Impact on Local Communities



Editor's Note

At the heart of wildlife tourism lies a critical yet often understated stakeholder: the local community. The success of conservation efforts is deeply intertwined with the well-being and participation of people living around protected areas.

When managed responsibly, wildlife tourism becomes a powerful engine for inclusive growth. It creates employment, supports local enterprises, and brings much-needed economic stability to remote regions. From guides and naturalists to lodge staff and artisans, tourism opens up diverse livelihood opportunities that are directly linked to the protection of natural habitats.

Equally important is the sense of ownership it fosters. When communities see tangible benefits

from conservation and tourism, they are more likely to become active partners in protecting wildlife and preserving ecosystems.

However, this impact must be carefully managed. Ensuring fair wages, skill development, and equitable distribution of benefits is essential to making tourism truly sustainable. The focus must remain on building long-term value rather than short-term gains.

As the sector evolves, placing communities at the centre of wildlife tourism is not just good practice—it is essential for the future of conservation itself.

*By Deepika Chowdhry,
Director, TOFT India*



Sustainable tourism is not just about
where you go, but how you impact lives



SUPPORTER
FEATURE

Lodge of the Quarter



EVOLVE BACK
KABINI, INDIA



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Evolve Back Kuruba Safari Lodge, Kabini

Evolve Back Kuruba Safari Lodge, Kabini, set along the serene Kabini reservoir and overlooking the rich wilderness of Nagarhole, is thoughtfully designed to reflect the spirit of the indigenous Kadu Kuruba community and its deep connection to the land. Rooted in the vibrant social tapestry of the local Kadu Kuruba tribe, the lodge offers a distinctive wildlife setting shaped by both culture and landscape.

Guided by a strong sense of responsibility, the lodge works closely with surrounding communities to support livelihoods, protect the environment, and preserve traditional knowledge and practices. Sustainability is embedded in its approach, with ongoing efforts focused on conservation, resource management, and reducing ecological impact.





EXPERT PERSPECTIVE

Responsible Tourism for a Growing Future

By Vishal Singh, Director - TOFT

India stands at the cusp of immense opportunity. In 2024, the tourism and hospitality sector supported nearly 8% of the nation's total employment - a figure poised to rise steadily in the coming decade. With such growth on the horizon, our collective responsibility is clear: to ensure that every step forward strengthens, rather than strains, our natural and cultural heritage. For travellers who seek more than just a view - who want to connect, learn, and contribute - sustainable lodges, homestays, tour operators, community enterprises, and conservation initiatives illuminate the path. Their efforts prove that meaningful experiences and responsible stewardship can, and must, coexist.



Sustainability & Wildlife

Latest Updates

Shift Towards Low-Carbon Operations in Wildlife Lodges



Wildlife resorts in central India (Tadoba, Pench) are increasingly adopting alternative fuels like biomass pellets and induction cooking to reduce carbon footprints, highlighting a growing shift toward greener hospitality practices.

Biodiversity Discoveries Strengthening Conservation Value

Recent research in the Western Ghats has led to the discovery of new species in Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary, reinforcing the ecological significance of protected areas and the need for responsible tourism models.



Sustainability & Wildlife

Latest Updates

India Ranks 3rd in Sustainable Travel in Asia (2026)

Travel habits in India are clearly changing. More people are starting to think about sustainability when they plan a trip. In fact, Agoda's 2026 survey shows that eighty-eight per cent of Indian travellers consider it, which puts India third in Asia, just behind Thailand and Indonesia. What is interesting is that this shift is not only about the environment.



- 39% want to support local communities.
- 33% care about nature and wildlife.
- Others just want their trips to feel more meaningful.

It feels like travel is becoming less about ticking off places on a list and more about the impact people have while they are there. We can already see this in small choices, like picking eco-friendly stays or choosing local experiences over generic ones.

There is also a practical side to it.

53% believe sustainable tourism helps local economies grow. And this mindset is only getting stronger. 90% of travellers expect sustainability to matter even more over the next three years; businesses that ignore this will fall behind quickly.

New Supporters & Certifications

New



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New and Renew



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New



Members



New



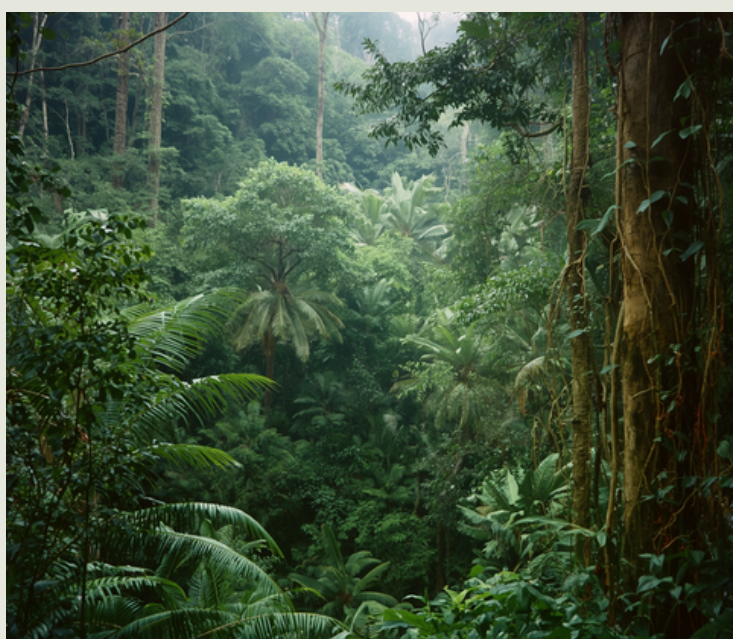
Status Achieved



Upcoming Events

International Day for Biological Diversity

Date: 22 May



We will be observing this global event to highlight the importance of biodiversity and its role in sustaining life on Earth. This year's theme, "Harmony with nature and sustainable development," emphasises the need to align environmental conservation with human progress.

The day also marks the adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity, promoting global action for nature protection. Through this initiative, organisations like UNESCO encourage collective efforts to preserve ecosystems.

Indian Wildlife Ecology Conference (IWEC 2026)

Date: 10–12 July 2026

A national conference on wildlife ecology will convene researchers, students, and practitioners from across India to exchange current research and emerging perspectives in the field. The programme will include thematic symposia, oral and poster presentations, panel discussions, and structured networking opportunities, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration.

Building on the success of its inaugural edition, the conference aims to strengthen the scientific community and contribute to advancing evidence-based conservation and ecological research in the country.



FROM TOFT

Supporting a Forest Hero

TOFT, through its Forest Heroes Programme, recently extended financial assistance to Forester Shri Brijesh Sen of the Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve, who was seriously injured while performing his duties.

On 25th February 2026, during a routine patrol in Range Sarra, Shri Sen encountered an offender involved in the illegal felling and theft of teak wood. While intervening, he was attacked and sustained severe head injuries.

He was first treated at a Government Hospital and later referred to a private hospital in Jabalpur for further care. Incidents like these highlight the real risks faced by frontline forest staff in protecting forest resources. The resulting medical treatment placed a significant financial burden on Shri Sen and his family.



In line with the objectives of the Forest Heroes Programme to provide timely financial assistance in such situations, TOFT supported Shri Brijesh Sen with financial aid to help cover his medical expenses. We wish him a steady recovery and remain committed to supporting the frontline staff who safeguard India's natural heritage.



FROM TOFT

Momentum with Good Travel Alliance



The Good Travel Alliance (GTA) and TOFT recently had a really engaging conversation that sparked some promising ideas for working more closely together. It quickly became clear that both organisations share the same goal: promoting tourism that genuinely benefits local communities, protects the environment, and respects cultural heritage.

GTA is already bringing together some major players in the travel industry, including Amadeus, Outdooractive, ITB Berlin, the Adventure Travel Trade Association, GoGood, and Tourism Cares. Together, they're focused on creating travel options that reduce environmental and cultural harm while delivering positive impacts on the ground.

One of the most interesting parts of the discussion was the idea of partnering to pilot verified, low-impact travel experiences. There was also a strong emphasis on making certification more accessible, particularly for micro and small businesses that often struggle to meet complex requirements.

Another key insight was how quickly traveller expectations are evolving more than 80% of travellers are now actively looking for sustainable options, which gives destinations a real opportunity to rethink how they present themselves.

Overall, there's a clear alignment in values and intent between the two organisations, and a strong case for deeper collaboration. It feels like a natural partnership, with both sides committed to building a more responsible and resilient future for tourism. This conversation seems like just the start, with more discussions likely as the relationship continues to develop.



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TOFT works to promote responsible tourism that supports conservation, communities, and credible sustainability standards.



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