

EMBRACING INDIA'S RURAL CHARMS

A Journey into Experiential and Responsible Rural Tourism



This World Tourism Day (on September 27th), we shall shed light on a form of travel that not only enriches the traveller's soul but also uplifts local communities and preserves cultural heritage. Rural tourism in India has emerged as a beacon of sustainable travel, offering travellers the opportunity to immerse themselves in authentic experiences while fostering responsible tourism practices. Let's embark on a journey into the heart of India's rural landscapes, exploring the significance of experiential and responsible travel in shaping a more profound connection with both people and places.

India's rural landscape is rich and diverse, both culturally and geographically. This ultimately has the potential to offer so much to travellers worldwide and create new, life changing experiences for people. The allure lies in the chance to engage with the local way of life, gain insights into ancient customs, and witness the harmony between humans and nature.

Benefits to local communities and heritage

Rural tourism empowers local communities economically, as they now have their source of income from tourism, instead of having to emigrate to cities in search of work. This helps prevent ghost cities, while also automatically preserving cultural heritage, natural resources and autonomy of the community. Tourists also get to experience new lifestyles and know the stories of people unheard in the mainstream previously.



This type of travel which gives an experience has been termed experiential travel, and it encourages active participation of the traveller. Whether it is learning traditional crafts, savouring home-cooked meals or participating in local festivities, travellers forge deeper connections with the destination and its people. Imagine spending a day with a shepherd in the Himalayan foothills, learning to till the land with farmers in Thrikkaipetta, Wayanad or practising yoga in Auroville, Pondicherry!

Let's dive into a rural, experiential, responsible travel in Kotagiri

Kotagiri (Kodanadu) is the oldest hill station in Nilgiris, with an ethereal landscape of shola forests, unique cultural richness, ancient and archaeological significance. This part of Nilgiri biosphere is the home to a wide variety of flora and fauna including wild boars, barking deers and sloth bears. The town is primarily a home to five indigenous distinct tribal communities- the Kothas, Todas, Kurumbas and kaatunayakas each with their unique customs and traditions. The Toda Embroidery and Kurumba paintings are two unique cultural heritages of the respective indigenous communities. Kurumba Villages also have distinctive formations and structures of Dolmens* (They are made of two or more upright stones with a single stone lying across them) which serve as shrines honouring their heroic ancestors and deities.

Kotagiri is a serenely transformative experience for any traveller, and the tourist spot merits conscientious and sustainable tourism. As travellers, it is our responsibility to safeguard its natural beauty, culture and heritage.



This article is by Radhika Subramanian, Founder and CEO of Travel to Learn. It is an experiential travel organisation providing custom education travel programs, cross-cultural programs, faculty led programs and experiential learning programs. To know more about the organisation, go to www.traveltolearn.co.in. For enquiries, reach out at info@traveltolearn.co.in