



A SEAMLESS EXPERIENCE OF TRIBAL & RURAL TOURISM

chougān

MANDLA, MADHYA PRADESH

If the lives of tribal groups are considered as paradigms of historical evolution, a visit to Chougan will indeed leave some glittering feelings in your mind captured from the memories of history. Chougan and its picturesque landscape are located on the circumambulation path of holy river Narmada. Like elsewhere around Mandla, for Chougan also, the proximity of the sacred river appears as the soul of its peaceful atmosphere. Being endowed with bio-diversity rich forest areas and perennial water flows, any one with an interest in nature and rural way of life can have an unique experience in Chougan.



This picturesque tribal village is about 32 km from Mandla, close to the route for Kanha National Park which inspired Kipling to chronicle his famous 'Jungle book'. The local community has a rich heritage, complemented by their art and culture. Chougan will offer the visitor an experience of life among the tribal community, from the hustle and bustle of the city.



TRIBAL VILLAGE AS A REPOSITORY OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND HERITAGE

Baiga and Gond communities are two main tribal groups of Madhya Pradesh. Majority of Chougan's population comprises of these two groups. Being followed a tradition of hunting and foods gathering by generation, then consequently shift to agriculture, the Baigas have a general characteristic of symbiotic life style with nature and wild life. Their music, dance and costumes and ornaments recall the memories of their ancestors, who have conquered the nature and made their identity as Adim Jatis (Primitive community).

CULTURE AND CRAFT OF CHOUGAN

Waste to Wealth : Traditional skills like making handicraft items by using natural fiber and Bamboo are still alive in Chougan. A plant species called Ram phul (*Lantana Americana*), which is considered to be inhospitable to forest and agricultural land - is used to make valuable furniture and attractive souvenir items by the community artisans.

Similarly, articles are made from bamboo, wood and metal. Artisans of Chougan will be happy to train the interested visitors in their respective craft forms.

Karma, Shaila and Dadariya are the main dance forms popularly alive in Chougan. The visitor can wear traditional costumes and participate in the dance.





FESTIVALS AND RITUALS

Chaitra Navaratri, during the month of April - May, is the popular festival of Chougan. Thousands of tribal devotees visit the Madhya (sacred seat of tribal goddesses and their masters) every year which is located at the center of Chougan. The nine day long festival starts with the Jawara (sowing of wheat seeds in special bamboo baskets filled with soil collected

from village farm lands) and ends with the ceremony of immersing them in to river Narmada on the ninth day.

Chougan Madhai is another major festival and trading event after the Deewali celebrations in the month of October - November. Though the nearby villages celebrate Madhai with colourful dance and music events, it gets a spiritual and religious fervor when it reaches in Chougan.



MEMORIES OF ANCIENT GONDWANA KINGDOM

Two structures, one known as Motimahar and another Raibhagat ki Kothi, stand as the living monuments of ancient Gondwana kingdom on the banks of Narmada surrounded by several dilapidated structures and place of worships at Ramnagar, the nearest township of Chougan.

Besides these Dal Badal Mahal, Rani Mahal, Sarangi Mahal & other structures in ruins can be seen in Chougan.

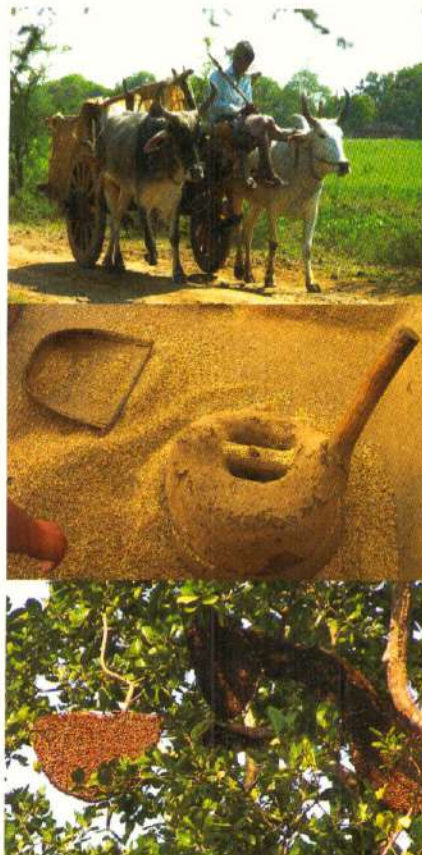
ORGANIC WAY OF LIFE

Another feature in peoples' livelihood dependency is sustainable use of natural resources and traditional way of agriculture which formed the part of their culture and heritage. A visitor can observe the cycle of agriculture practices with a total reliance on nature & its sustainable use with the blend of community based skills.

Traditional Cuisine : Food items like Paige (Liquid made out by cooking Corn with spices), Kodu and Kutki sweets (prepared by using two different hill millets), Hora (half baked cereals prepared by burning logs) are special food items of tribal communities in Chougan. A variety of uncultivated food items like wild Plums, Custard apples and different species of Berries and green edible plants contributes to the seasonal nutritional supplements. Host families will be happy to help the visitor in cooking traditional food.

Visitors can join the villagers in agricultural fields for farming. They can also trek to the forest to collect Mahua (*Madhuca Indica*) & pluck Tendu leaves (*Diospyros Melanoxylon*).

Honey Harvesting with Ideal Method : A visitor can enjoy the real experience of forest honey hunting (wild rock bees - *Apis Dorsata*) and join the tribal honey hunters after dusk. A number of youths with specific skills and an acrobat's flexibility moving towards the dense forest collecting honey from bee hives on tall tree tops will give an unforgettable experience to the tourists. Bottles of fresh comb honey will be available.



IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

Bio-diversity rich lush green forest is a feast for any eye. Binocular visions of water flows and village hamlets from the peak of a mountain will really bring some poetical imagination to ones mind. Nature lovers and bird watchers can enjoy the trekking as a superlative feeling. Free from light and air pollution, one can also enjoy the star studded night sky and telescopic view of the heavenly bodies.

The quench of having a real experience in the banks of Narmada will only satisfy with a walk along agricultural and forest land. Through out the stretches from Chougan to the river, one can enjoy not only the serene natural beauty of the diverse farm lands but the creamy sand beds will provide the visitor a space for enjoying the cool breeze of the western wind.

Chougan offers ample opportunities to all . . . nature, adventure, meditation, Yoga and many more.



LOCAL TOURIST CIRCUIT

- ▶ Moti Mahal & Narmada river at Ramnagar
- ▶ Ghodaghat at Madhupuri
- ▶ Deity of Rani Durgavati at Madhupuri
- ▶ Rock formation for trekking at Kala Pahad
- ▶ Temples and Narmada river at Suraj Kund
- ▶ Annual cattle fair at Hirdenagar
- ▶ Babeha hot water spring on Jabalpur road

AT MANDLA

- ▶ Mandla Fort
- ▶ Mahishmati Ghat
- ▶ Sahastradhara
- ▶ Archaeological Museum

The course of river Narmada itself is a magical view to any visitor. Gargling sound, when it flows through rocky terrains, reflective surface during early sunrise and evening time, asylum for the local fisherman with their country made wooden boats slowly moving, green vegetable beds on the banks. In addition to all this people consider Narmada as their mother goddesses.

Suraj Kund is situated on the way from Mandla to Chougan within a distance of 16 Km. As its name

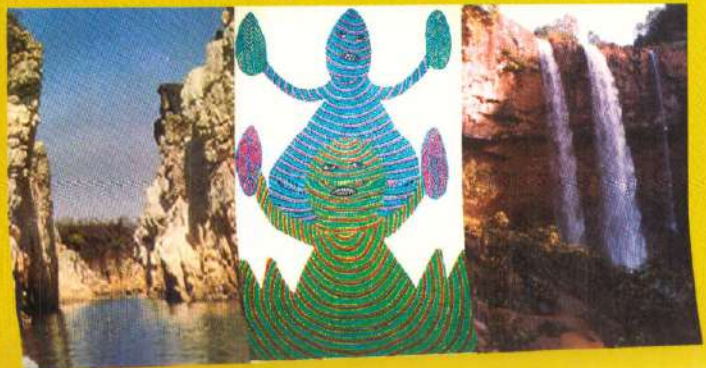
involves the importance of the place, two temples and a huge banyan tree in the center place with the course of Narmada in the nearest proximity makes the location a beautiful and peaceful place for spiritual and health tourists.

Narmada festival (An event in which hundreds of meters of Chunri (cloths) put on across the Narmada river) attracts thousands of visitors and pilgrims towards Suraj kund.



REGIONAL TOURIST CIRCUIT

- ▶ Kanha National Park - The Tiger Safari
- ▶ Ghugwa Fossil park, Dindori district
- ▶ Amarkantak - origin of Narmada river
- ▶ Baiga Chak region, Dindori district
- ▶ Bhedaghat & Marble rocks, Jabalpur
- ▶ Pench Tiger Reserve, Seoni
- ▶ Pachmari Biosphere Reserve, Chhindwara
- ▶ Bandhavgarh National Park





ABOUT ETP / RTS

Under the Rural Tourism Scheme (RTS) of Government of India, Ministry of Tourism and UNDP India have joined hands to launch Endogenous Tourism Project (ETP) at thirty two sites in twenty states of India.

Community ownership and management is central to the project strategy. The project implementation agency is training the host communities in aspects of the hospitality, reception, entertainment, lodging, cuisine etc.

'Vishram Sthals' (rest houses) that use local material and traditional skills of design and building style and other infrastructural facilities are being developed by the government.

The site at Chougan is expected to be ready to welcome the tourists by early 2007.



LOCATION

Chougan is located 32 kms away from Mandla town. Mandla Fort narrow gauge railway station is 20 Kms distance from the village. Jabalpur is the nearest city (100 km) where railway, air & road links are available. Tourist can reach over Chougan from Raipur & Nagpur which are distanced 250 kms each.

Traditional food including organically grown rice and hill millets, seasonal vegetables, fruits and forest products can be relished. Arrangement for accommodation (guest house & home stay) is under construction. The visitors can stay at MPT Motel and hotels at Mandla.



Endogenous Tourism Project / Rural Tourism Scheme
(Ministry of Tourism, GoI & UNDP India)
www.explorerruralindia.org

In partnership with
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