

Forest authorities to launch village ecotourism circuit in UP's Pilibhit with UP Tourism Corporation

TNN | Sep 10, 2023, 07:54 PM IST



PILIBHIT: In a move to reduce the increasing pressure of ecotourism on Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (PTR), forest authorities have initiated an eco-tourism circuit situated outside the PTR boundaries. The circuit will be part of a village eco-tourism plan that will also provide an opportunity for tourists to enjoy a night's stay in villages.

PTR will coordinate with the UP State Tourism Development Corporation (UPSTDC) to develop this plan.

Speaking to TOI, the divisional forest officer of PTR, Naveen Khandelwal, said, "Drawing inspiration from the scenic surroundings of water bodies and natural beauty, we have

selected the village of Selha to inaugurate this plan. Selha will be ready to welcome tourists during the upcoming jungle safari season, running from November 15, 2023 and June 15, 2024."

The village eco-tourism will be available for tourists throughout the year, as it will not be restricted by time limits like jungle safari sessions. The new plan is also expected to generate immense opportunities for self-employment for the local stakeholders living in proximity to the reserve.

"The new plan has been devised to encompass a 14-kilometre site-seeing trip. The itinerary includes visits to the Sharda Sagar dam, the bifurcation point of three feeder canals of the river Sharda, the siphon aqueduct of the

dam's outlet canal, the Kheri feeder canal located in the Barahi forest range, the outer forest stretch of the reserve and the origin point of the river Gomti in village Madhotanda," Khandelwal said.

The UPSTDC would financially and technically assist the members of eco-development committees (EDC) to construct beautiful wooden and thatched tourist huts equipped with air-cooling systems and attached toilets. A commercial tourist canteen at village Selha, promoted by EDC, is already in operation to provide a variety of quality meals, Khandelwal added.

"The prime aim of launching this plan is to protect the tigers and other wildlife from disturbance caused by the increasing footfall of eco-tourists and the subsequent operation of motorised tourist vehicles in the core forest area of the reserve," Khandelwal pointed out.

The officiating regional tourist officer of UPSTDC at Bareilly, Manish Singh, said, "We provide a 25% subsidy to entrepreneurs for the structuring of the tourist huts in addition to the technical and design-related guidance. The selected village will first be inspected by our expert consultant committee members to review its location and surroundings in accordance with our standards. The final decision will be subject to the nod extended by a designated official committee headed by Pilibhit's district magistrate."

"We are also planning to set up a land bank in the vicinity of PTR to allot pieces of land to reputed hotel groups on long-term leases for constructing tourist bungalows. We have already sent our requirements to the district magistrate, Pilibhit," he added.