

Bhutan waters await tourists



Comments 1



Chandan Kumar Duarah 21 October 2014 106655 views

When critics find the gross national happiness of idyllic Bhutan being blurred by large-scale unemployment that leads to a deep frustration among the youths making them susceptible to drug and drug-related deaths, a group of youth from a sleepy town of Bhutan are all set to try their destiny. With strong determination the River Guides of Panbang is ready to promote eco tourism by initiating river rafting in Drangme Chhu in Zhemgang district. The 11- member group, all in their 20s and 30s, underwent basic [training](#) in river rafting from the Tourism Council of Bhutan.

While industrial development has become the buzzword for almost all its neighbours, it is good to see this tiny Himalayan nation trying to keep pace with development in tandem with nature. Bhutanese youths, too, are seemed to be well aware of their privileged existence amid natural beauty and resources. And to keep this natural heritage intact, what can be a better option than eco-tourism? More and more youths are now involved with community based organizations to make a livelihood out of eco tourism ventures as well as to promote the country's natural beauty and resources-- albeit without destruction.

Nestled in an idyllic surrounding, in the sub-tropical belt of Bhutan, Panbang is almost adjacent to the Royal Manas National Park. Visitors from Assam usually prefer the route that snakes through two national parks—the Manas National Park in the Indian side and the Royal Manas National Park on the Bhutan side. By the river Manas that becomes Mangde Chhu upstream, one is enthralled by a rare sighting of a barking deer or a wild tusker, hornbills at the russet-crowned tree-tops or an occasional appearance of a troop of langurs. Panbang Eco Camp in south east Bhutan is almost adjacent to the Royal Manas National Park. The rich wildlife viewing opportunities here more than compensates for the simple comforts the facility has to offer. There is a suspension bridge crossing the Mangde Chhu from where the real excursion starts. It is one/two hours walk from the bridge to the actual camp site and the walk offers a great opportunity to bird watchers and nature lovers. The spectacular view of the mountains surrounding Panbang is simply captivating!



Shilling Toe Eco Camp is 30 Kms away from Panbang town and lies 420m above sea level. The scenic views of villages scattered along the way amidst the [green](#) is simply a treat to the eye. Lifestyle matches the 70s or 80s; tradition—ancient. While October/November is the best period for water sports—December offers a more picturesque landscape with ripe glittering oranges in gardens on the other side of the river; the sweet-scented smell filling the mountain air.

Tourists who want to stay the night at Panbang are advised to carry entry passes that can be obtained at entry-points of Namlang , Samdrup Zonkhar or Gelephu or they can simply contact Kinley Dorji, Chief Operator of River Guides of Panbang (email: kinlaydorji@gmail.com). River Guides offers all arrangement including visa or permission for tourists from Assam or any other state. Kinley is determined that eco tourism gets a boost in the region. “The Indian side of Manas sees a high footfall every tourist season, we will only be happy to welcome at least ten per cent of them initially, a hopeful Kinley says.

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BY CHANDAN KUMAR DUARAH

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