

IIT-Gn to study role of local communities in ecotourism

Ashish.Chauhan
@timesgroup.com

Ahmedabad: A study at Indian Institute of Technology-Gandhinagar (IIT-Gn) this summer will explore ecotourism in India in the context of local communities.

The study will cover ecotourism projects with special focus on Gujarat and Uttarakhand and will address how local communities benefit from, are involved in and contribute to them.

The research project, "Ecotourism in India", is a summer research project carried out by IIT-Gn Professor Ambika Aiyadurai along with her two students Swara Joshi, student of MA in culture and society, and Subodh Kumar, student of MTech in mechanical engineering. Talking about the project, Aiyadurai said, "The ecotourism is one of the fast growing industries, especially in the developing countries. Unlike the mass tourism, ecotourism holds potential for both



The study will mainly examine the role of local communities in ecotourism projects

economic development and environment protection. My objective is to understand the involvement of local communities in ecotourism project and the impact of ecotourism on the local people's economy and culture."

Aiyadurai said that they would identify few ecological sites in Gujarat which include Gir national park and Maldharis who stay surrounding the area. "The study will mainly focus on wildlife, social factors attached with ecotourism and how people are connected with

it," she said.

"The project has a potential to evolve into a larger project to gain a sociological understanding of ecotourism in other specific parts of India as well," she added. Joshi will examine ecotourism in Gujarat, analyzing different models of ecotourism — state-run, NGO-run, privately-run — in the state. The study will mainly examine the role of local communities in these models and examine the socio-economic impact of ecotourism on the local population.

Kumar will carry out a sociological study of the rise of bird tourism in India, mainly in Uttarakhand. A part of his study will focus on documenting the industry that has evolved around the bird tourism in India, the kind of agencies or organizations that are involved, and how the local communities are engaged, in what capacity, and how their livelihoods and standard of living improved because of this form of ecotourism.

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