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Green Getaway

Exploring Eco-Tourism in Chandigarh








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Green Getaway

Exploring Eco-Tourism in Chandigarh

Eco-tourism is a form of responsible travel that focuses on conserving and protecting natural environments, wildlife, and local cultures. The goal of eco-tourism is to minimize the impact of tourism on the environment, promote conservation, and provide educational and sustainable experiences for travellers.

Significance of eco-tourism

Conservation	Sustainable Development	Education	Cultural Protection	Alternative to Mass Tourism
Ecotourism aims to promote conservation efforts by supporting protected areas and wildlife habitats. Revenue generated from ecotourism can contribute to the maintenance and protection of these areas.	Ecotourism emphasizes sustainable practices that benefit local communities economically without causing harm to the environment. It often involves community engagement and the development of local infrastructure.	Ecotourism provides opportunities for environmental education. Travelers gain insights into local ecosystems, biodiversity, and conservation issues, fostering a greater understanding of the importance of protecting natural resources.	Ecotourism often includes experiences that showcase local cultures and traditions. This can lead to cultural preservation and the appreciation of indigenous knowledge and practices.	Unlike traditional mass tourism, which can have negative environmental and cultural impacts, ecotourism offers a more sustainable and responsible approach to travel.
				

Chandigarh as tourism industry

Chandigarh, located in northern India, is a unique city that serves as the capital of two states, Punjab and Haryana. Designed by the renowned architect Le Corbusier, Chandigarh is known for its well-planned urban layout, modern architecture, and extensive green spaces. While it may not be a traditional tourist destination like some other Indian cities, it has its own appeal and attractions. Here are some aspects of Chandigarh's tourism industry.

- **Architecture and Urban Planning:** Chandigarh is famous for its modernist architecture, which was largely planned by Le Corbusier in the 1950s. The city is organized into sectors, each with its own set of amenities, parks, and residential

areas. Key architectural attractions include the Capitol Complex, Open Hand Monument, and the Rock Garden, a sculpture garden made entirely of industrial and home waste.

- **Gardens and Green Spaces:** The city is known for its well-maintained gardens and green spaces. The Rose Garden, Zakir Hussain Rose Garden, is one of the largest rose gardens in Asia and a popular tourist spot. Sukhna Lake, an artificial reservoir at the foothills of the Himalayas, is a recreational hub for boating and leisure walks.
- **Cultural Attractions:** Chandigarh has a vibrant cultural scene with theatres, museums, and art galleries. The Government Museum and Art Gallery is known for its collection of Gandharan sculptures, Pahari and Rajasthani miniature paintings.
- **Educational Institutions:** The city is home to prestigious educational institutions like Panjab University and Punjab Engineering College. The presence of these institutions attracts students, researchers, and academics, contributing to the overall cultural and intellectual atmosphere.
- **City Events and Festivals:** Chandigarh hosts various cultural events, festivals, and fairs throughout the year. These events showcase the cultural diversity of the region and attract visitors.

Tourist Inflow

While Chandigarh draw moderate tourists as compared to more traditional tourist destinations in India, its unique blend of modernist architecture, green landscapes, and cultural offerings makes it an appealing destination for those interested in urban planning, architecture, and a more relaxed atmosphere compared to bustling metropolitan cities. Figure 1 illustrates the tourist inflow (domestic and international) from the period 2018-2022, in which a dip is seen for the years 2020 and 2021, which may be attributed to the pandemic.

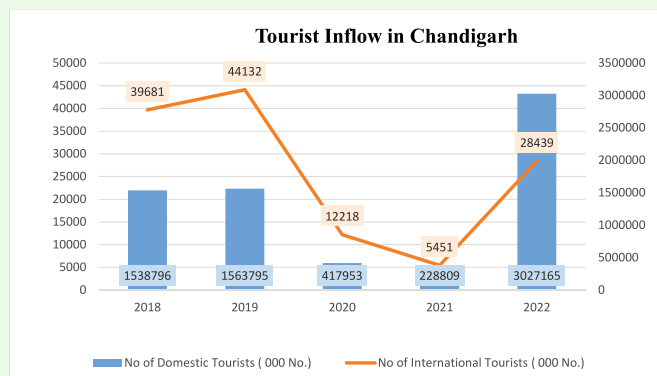


Figure 1: Tourist Inflow in Chandigarh 2018-2022

Eco-tourism in Chandigarh

Even though most tourist destinations in Chandigarh already embrace sustainable tourism, the administration has made various attempts to transition towards eco-tourism, a more specialized aspect of sustainable tourism. In an effort to encourage eco-tourism and to inform and raise awareness among the public about the diverse flora and fauna, the Chandigarh Administration's Department of Forests & Wildlife is working on the forefront to establish several places as eco-tourism sites. In a report titled "Development of Sustainable Tourist Destinations in Chandigarh: Inception Report" (July 2023) by the Society for Tourism and Entertainment Promotion in Chandigarh (STEPS), four sites in Chandigarh have been tagged as eco-tourism sites, the details of which are given below.

City Bird Sanctuary

- **Place:** Sector 21
- **Timing of opening and closing:**
April to September: 5:00 am to 8:00 pm
- **October to March:** 5:30 am to 7:00 pm
- **Fee:** No Fee
- **Brief description and main attractions:** It was first of its kind urban wildlife sanctuary in the area of 3 hectares (2.9 ha. to be precise) in the heart of city. In common parlance this has come to be known as Parrot Garden or Tota Park. It was declared as City Bird Sanctuary on



29th September 1988. The major varieties of parakeets found in sanctuary consists of Green parakeets, Rose ringed parakeets, Peach headed parakeets. Sanctuary

also has different facilities which consists of water pump of MCPH at one end on western side. There is a shallow water point created and fed with rubber pipe from the pump There are 3-4 benches placed at various location in the sanctuary nut in the delapidated shape. The Kutcha path is half way sunken into shadow pond created by excessive water inflow from the small gate opening in the park which appears to be draining south-westward into the sanctuary due to natural slope and in the eventuality of rainfall.



Sukhna Wild Life Sanctuary

- **Place:** Sukhna wild life sanctuary
- **Timing of opening and closing:** Nepli gate 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
- **Fee:** Rs 50/per person
- **Brief description and main attractions:** Sukhna Lake was formed in 1958 across the Sukhna Choe, a seasonal stream flowing down the Shivalik hills. The Shivalik hills in the Sukhna catchment are ecologically sensitive and geographically unstable, making them highly prone to erosion during the rainy season. Soil conservation measures supplemented with massive afforestation led to the development of lush forests in the hilly catchment area, which is now an ideal habitat for a wide variety of fauna.

Due to its ecological, faunal, floral, geomorphological, and natural significance, this area was declared a wildlife





sanctuary (named Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary) via Chandigarh Administration Notification No. 694-HII (4)-98/4519 dated March 6, 1998 to protect, propagate and develop wildlife and its environment. Main attractions of the sanctuary include diverse wild flora and fauna and natural trails.

To educate citizens about the flora and fauna of Chandigarh, the forest department conducts monthly trekking in the sanctuary, except from June to September, which is



open to the public. Interested participants can register online or manually by submitting a registration form at the department office. The department recently developed a new trekking route to allow participants to enjoy nature without disturbing wildlife.

This Wildlife tourism is restricted to e-permit holders only. There are two entry gates to the sanctuary: the Kansal gate and Nepli gate. The route to the Kansal gate passes through 'Khuda Alisher' village or 'Kaimbwala' village of Chandigarh. The route to the Nepli gate goes via 'Suketri' village of Haryana.



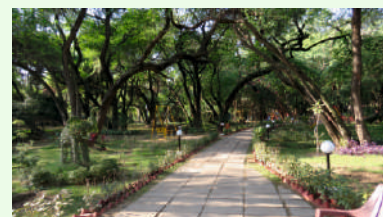
SCAN TO REGISTER



There are four nature trails, the longest stretching from the Nepli Inspection Hut to the Kansal Log Hut. This 8 km-long trail ranges over three hillocks and has a steep gradient. The tourism zone covers 15-20% of the sanctuary area, with the remaining area designated as a wilderness zone with limited or no access for tourists. Beside trekking tourists can also go boating along the Nepli Inspection Hut and Kansal Log Hut which are near water bodies. The best time to visit the sanctuary is between October and March, and visits are allowed only between sunrise and sunset.

Nagar Van/City Forest

- **Place:** Near Sukhna Lake
- **Timing of opening and closing:** 6:00 am to 6:00 pm
- **Fee:** No Fee



Brief description and main attractions: It is an area spreading over a sprawling 100 hectares. The main attractions include earthen tracks near Sukhna Lake, shallow water bodies, open air gym, kids play section, meditation hut etc. Information about the local flora and fauna is installed along the tract on signages, wooden benches using dead and dry trees are placed along the tract.



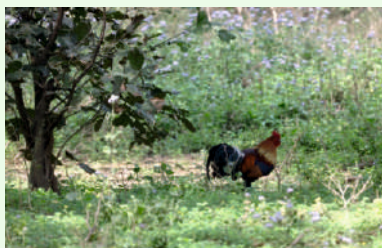
Lake Reserve Forest Area

- **Place:** Near Sukhna Lake
- **Timing of opening and closing:**
6:00 am to 12:00 pm and 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm
- **Fee:** No Fee



Brief description and main attractions: The forest area, located near the renowned Sukhna Lake, covers an expanse of 153.9 hectares. This region boasts a diverse range of plant and animal life, and efforts have been

made to promote wildlife conservation here. For visitors, the Forest Department has established a natural trail, providing an opportunity to observe various forest creatures like wild boars, peacocks, jungle fowl,



and sambars. These animals are frequently spotted during a leisurely stroll along the trail, offering tourists an immersive experience in nature. Along the trail, one comes across several informative

boards that provide knowledge about wildlife. These boards are designed to enhance understanding of the local ecosystem and the wildlife that inhabits it. Additionally, the resting towers offer a convenient spot to take a break and soak in the natural beauty of the surroundings.

Other initiatives aligning with eco-tourism in Chandigarh

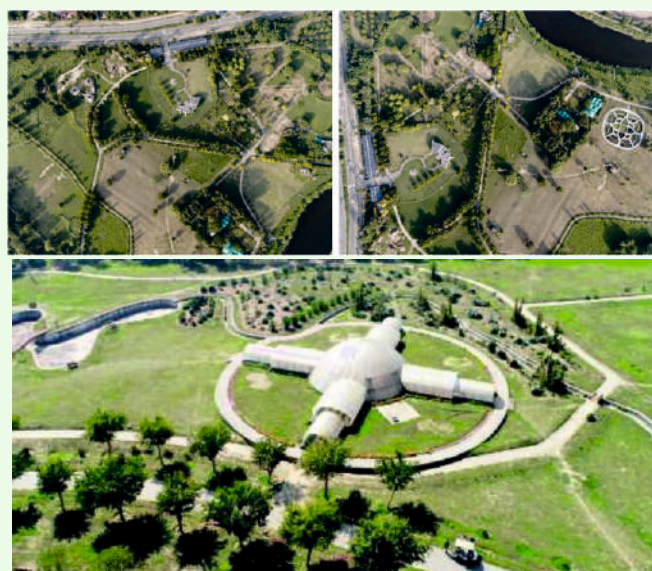
In addition to the designated eco-tourism sites, there are several other initiatives in Chandigarh that align with eco-tourism principles and help to increase awareness among the

masses regarding the diverse flora and fauna of the region. These include the Botanical Garden, Bird Park, and Nature Interpretation Centres etc., which are closely related to the objectives of eco-tourism and hence can be aligned with the eco-tourism definition. The details of these sites are as follows:

Botanical Garden

- **Place:** Sarangpur
- **Timing of opening and closing:**
Winters 5.00 am to 6.30pm | **Summers** 4.30 am to 7.00pm
- **Fee:** No Fee

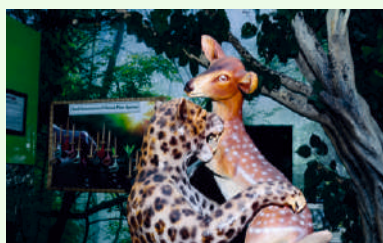
Brief description and main attractions: Situated in the Sarangpur Village the Botanical Garden spreads over 176 acres comprising several sections showcasing different plant species. These sections include Medicinal Plants (more than 100 species), Aquatic plants (more than 15 exotic and rare plant species), Cactus (around 100 cacti species), Pinetum (14 pine species), Sacred Grove Section (Developed in the form of Cosmic Tree), Bambusetum (22 species of bamboos), Palmatum (20 species of palms & Cycads), Japanese Garden (features the landscape of Japanese garden), Nutrition Section (more than 20 trees /fruit varieties fit for human consumption) Ficus Grove, Arboretum (128 woody species), Bulbous Garden, Tropical Rain Forest Section, Rare Plant Section. Other facilities include energy park building, information kiosk, battery operated vehicles, parking facilities, lawns for recreation, benches, shelters, meditation huts, cycle track, pedestal path and public amenities etc.



Nature Interpretation Centre

- **Place:** Kansal Forest area at Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary, Near Sukhna Lake
- **Timing of opening and closing:** 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
- **Fee:** No Fee

Brief description with main attractions: The Nature Interpretation Centre showcases the dynamic biodiversity of Chandigarh forests and variety of flora that supports its rich wildlife. It depicts catchment of Sukhna, Information on biodiversity of Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary along



with interactive activities for kids. The centre is divided into 2 sections one section has three-dimensional pictorial display panel of migratory birds, resident birds and other rare species with the highlights of their habitat whereas other section displays life size diorama of animal species found in Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary. Interactive voice modules of birds, touch screen kiosk,

mural, indoor and outdoor signages has also been installed at the centre.

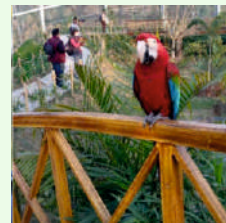
Chandigarh Bird Park

- **Place:** Near Sukhna Lake
- **Timing of opening and closing:**
December to February - 10:00 am to 4:30 pm
March to September - 10:00 am to 6:30 pm
October to November - 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
- **Fee:** Rs. 50 /per person



Brief description and main attractions:

The Chandigarh Bird Park exemplifies the city's dedication to biodiversity and green spaces. This haven for avian enthusiasts showcases a diverse array of bird species, both local and exotic, within carefully designed natural habitats. The park not only provides a recreational space but also serves as an educational hub, promoting awareness about bird conservation through interpretative displays, guided tours, and interactive sessions.

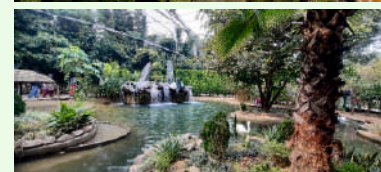
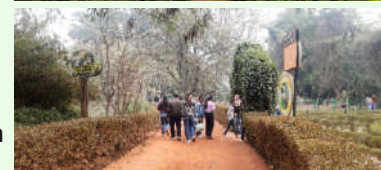


Main attractions of this Park are African Love Birds, Budgerigars, White Swan, Black Swan, Wood duck, Golden Pheasant, Yellow Golden Pheasant, Green Wing Macaw, Dun Conures, African Grey Parrot, Finches and Melanistic Pheasant. The birds in the park are aquatic, terrestrial and tamed. The Chandigarh Bird

Park ensures abundant space for each bird, offering a flying height of 58 feet and a total ground area of approximately 200×150 feet for both terrestrial and aquatic birds. The design of the structure encircles numerous plants with diverse canopies, creating an optimal environment that provides habitat, food, and shelter for the birds, allowing them to fly and breed freely. This architectural marvel is anticipated to become the tallest structure in the country within the aviary domain.

Major attractions

- Navgraha Vatika
- Nakshatra Van
- Journey from Sukhna Lake to Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary
- Rashi Van
- Small Aviaries Section
- Budgerigar
- Love Bird
- Large Aviaries
- Aquatic aviary
- Terrestrial aviary
- Activities area
- Cafeteria and a Souvenir Shop





City Forest Near I.T. Park

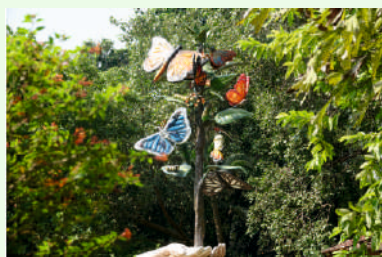
- **Place:** Manimajra Village
- **Timing of opening and closing:** 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
- **Fee:** No Fee

Brief description and main attractions: It is green belt given name as city forests containing more than 40 species of trees in this area. It is a good for morning and evening walkers. Nature trails, rain shelters, sitting benches, meditation huts, interpretative signages are some of the main attractions of the area.

Butterfly Park

- **Place:** Sector 26, Chandigarh
- **Timing of opening and closing:** 9:00 am-5:00pm
- **Fee:** No Fee

Brief description and main attractions: The department has developed a Butterfly Park in Sector-26, Chandigarh, which spreads over an area of 7 acres. The park has been designed to facilitate an ideal environment for the breeding of butterflies. This beautiful park attracts lots of visitors. To create an ideal habitat for the butterflies, special care is taken, and numerous host and nectar plants can be easily seen. These plants attract butterflies and greatly help in the breeding of specific species. Host plants like Mango, Salix, Citrus spp., Amla, Ashoka, Camphor, etc., are planted for the breeding of butterflies, and nectar plants such as Dahlia, Pansy, Marigold, Sweet Peas, Antirrhinum, Cosmos, Zinnia, etc., are planted seasonally. Butterflies also derive nourishment from pollen, tree sap, rotten fruits, dung, and dissolved minerals in wet sand or dirt. Rotten fruits are placed at different locations in the park to attract the butterflies. Over a hundred species of different butterflies have been observed on various occasions. Main attractions include the nature trail, butterfly conservatory, interpretation centre, interpretive boards, interpretive signages, host/nectar plant boards, waterfall structures, and waterfall structures.



Peacock Park

- **Place:** Sector 39
- **Timing of opening and closing:** 10:00 am-5:00 pm
- **Fee:** No Fee

Brief description and main attractions: The department has developed an area of 5.7 acres covered with full vegetation as a suitable habitat for peafowls. The objective of the management in this park is to provide a safe resting place for peafowls without any human disturbance. Adequate arrangements have been made for the provision of water for the birds inside the park in the form of artificial ponds. The area has been fenced from all sides to provide a secluded place for the resting and breeding of our national bird. One can hear the loud cries of these magnificent birds that often pay locals a visit, especially during the rains. Today, the park has a good number of peafowls who have made it their preferred shelter.



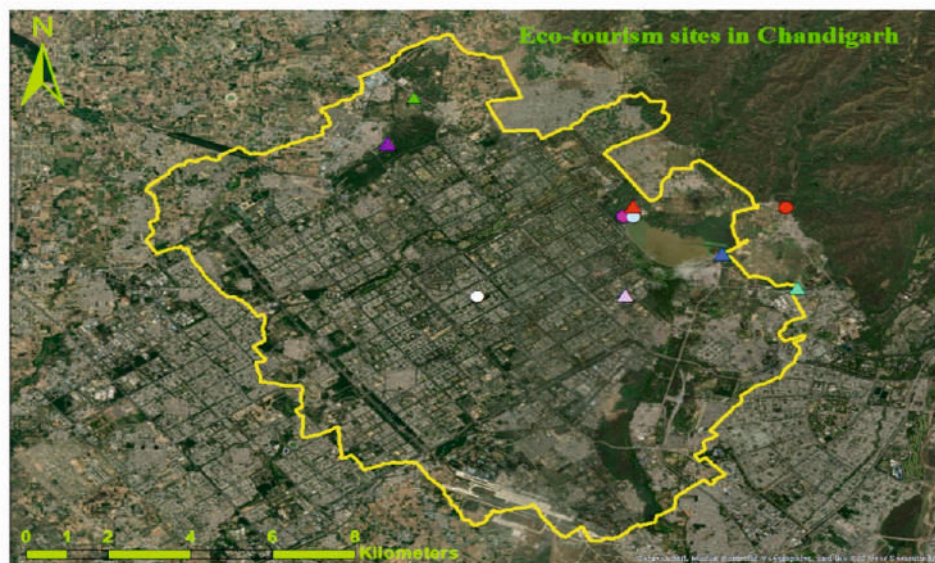
Dhanas Lake

- **Place:** Dhanas Village
- **Timing of opening and closing:** None
- **Fee:** No Fee

Brief description and main attractions: Dhanas Lake, nestled in the heart of Chandigarh's Dhanas village and covering an area of 0.06 km², offers visitors a serene retreat amidst picturesque surroundings. Visitors can relax amidst the tranquil ambiance and enjoy the views of migratory birds and diverse aquatic life. Beyond its scenic beauty, the lake is a vital ecosystem, supporting a diverse array of aquatic life and serving as a preferred habitat for resident and winter migratory birds. Additionally, the lake, located close to a reserved forest, offers views of a variety of flora and fauna for visitors to enjoy. As an innovative approach, the Chandigarh Administration has installed one of the largest floating solar panels in North India on Dhanas Lake. The electricity generated by these solar panels is also used to run a fountain on the lake, which helps in its aeration and prevents eutrophication.



RELATED SDG'S



LEGEND

- City Bird WLS-SEC 21
- Lake Reserve Forest Area
- Nagar Van
- Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary Nepli Gate
- ▲ Botanical Garden
- ▲ Butterfly Park
- ▲ Chandigarh Bird Park
- ▲ City Forest IT Park
- ▲ Dhanas Lake
- ▲ NIC Regulatory End

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