

Eco-lodge: A Heaven for Nature Lovers

Eco-lodges are predominantly located in natural surroundings offering an experience close to nature. It is a concept where guests enjoy a place for what it inherently has to offer, rather than something that is replicated from elsewhere. The guests therefore, get to interact with the local people and observe their life-styles, appreciate a culture and environment, different from their own.



The cuisine here is usually local, the only adaptation may be the toning down of spice to suit the pallet of guests. This gives the guests an opportunity to tickle some of their dormant taste buds.

Most eco-lodges are remotely located and may not even have conventional electricity. While they provide all basic comforts, they may not be able to offer amenities such as TVs and Video players. Instead of sitting in the room glued to the TV or playing with their personal gadgets, guests are encouraged to move out of their comfort zone and explore the other available alternatives for entertainment.

The activities range from easy walks to serious treks, from amateur adventure activities to serious ones. When tired and the legs need rest, there is usually comfortable seating or hammocks, and a library with some interesting books. Even children who are used to modern day gadgets like video and computer games enjoy in-house activities such as art, painting, pottery, rope ladder climbing, rappelling etc.

Several species of birds and butterflies, rare flora and fauna wait to be explored with a pair of binoculars. The terrain may offer opportunities to swim in a stream or bath under a waterfall or splash in a beach. With negligible ambient light, the night sky turns out to be a star gazer's delight.

There may be a wildlife sanctuary nearby which might offer a safari, or a lake/reservoir which may offer a boat ride or a sandy white beach with turquoise blue waters.

The people employed at such eco-lodges are locals with basic training on how to interact with guests. They are not trained like in 5 star hotels and yet they are able to understand the needs of the guests and satisfy them. It can be often observed that language is no barrier to communication as long as there is patience and willingness to understand. The locals also get an opportunity to learn and understand the cultural background of the guests leading to a cultural exchange of sorts.



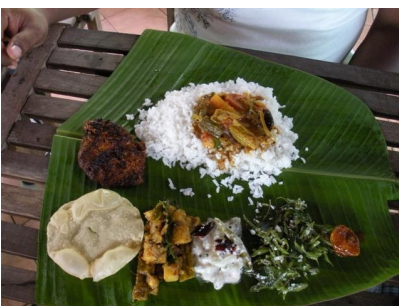
Classical as well as folk dance performances are arranged, through which the local cultural heritage is showcased. While locals get an opportunity to display their cultural heritage with pride, they also feel the need to preserve it.

To sum up the experience at an eco-lodge, it is de-stressing, rejuvenating and invigorating after which the mind is ready to face newer challenges in the urban world.

Eco lodges are usually small with less than 10 rooms. This ensures that there are no crowds and makes it an exclusive place to enjoy a holiday at a relaxed pace. There is no night-life and therefore guests go to bed early and rise early in the morning to the song of birds. It has a very positive impact on health of stressed urban souls leading a sedentary lifestyle.

The popularity of eco lodges is increasing because they offer an opportunity for rejuvenation rather than just recreation. It is a far deeper feeling of satisfaction than plain recreation. It is embalming to the soul than just the mind. It is about coming out of one's comfort zone and experiencing something that is simple, maybe slightly physically stressful and yet soothing. Little do people realize that even watching TV can be stressful, not to mention the hours spent in front of a computer screen in an average person's working day.

With an awareness that our natural environment is depleting while paving way for modern development, there is a need to preserve the natural resources and the cultural heritage of various regions. Otherwise the world will become a monotonous place and will lose its vibrancy making life boring when there is nothing left to explore.



This apart, an ecological imbalance can create other environmental catastrophes starting from landslides and global warming, leading to unpredictable climate changes, cyclones, typhoons, earth quakes and tsunamis.

As eco-locations become more and more popular, the next challenge is to protect them from over-exploitation. When a business does well and rakes-in money, the natural tendency is to expand. Sometimes, when the expansion is beyond the carrying capacity of the place, then the negative effects of tourism start becoming obvious.

The negative effects of tourism are evident at overcrowded beaches, concrete structures in the midst of serene natural settings, rampant prostitution, plastic and garbage littered beyond the ability to clean up.

The challenge for the future is to promote green tourism to the extent of a region's carrying capacity and not beyond.

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