A range of lodges provide an insight into local culture through briefings and weave local heritage into interior design. Svasara Lodge’s in-room folder includes information on local tribes and their library includes cultural books. The lodge is decorated with different art forms which are also on sale in their shop. Read case study.

Local Bastar and Dogra artefacts and paintings are used throughout Banjaar Tola – Taj Safaris to give a taste of local cultural traditions. Guests are also shown a documentary on Baiga culture to enhance their knowledge. Read case study.

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Singinawa Jungle Lodge is decorated with Gond art complementing a range of activities promoting local culture including a museum (see below). Read case study.

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Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge emulates the traditional longhouse style of Tharu architecture and is built from local materials. The structure is wooden, made from local Sal timber with a tile roof. The walls are made with reeds, mud and dung, serving as a natural antiseptic to keep the bugs out. This architectural style is slowly disappearing giving way to global materials such as concrete. The lodge receives many local visitors wanting to see the traditional design of a Tharu house.

Evolve Back Kabini’s buildings and guest huts are created in the style of the local Kadu Kuruba tribe using local labour and materials. The resort’s interpretation centre includes a Kuruba hut giving an insight into local culture. Read case study.

Mahua Kothi – Taj Safaris has created twelve standalone luxury cottages for its guests, Kutiyas, built of mud in the local style of architecture.

SELLING LOCAL ART AND HANDICRAFTS

Local handicrafts and artefacts are sold in a range of lodges - pictured here in the souvenir shop at Barahi Jungle Lodge, Nepal.

The shop at Singinawa Jungle Lodge stocks locally made handicrafts such as Gond paintings, Bastar artefacts, local pottery, Baiga jewellery and other handmade items. Local market visits are also encouraged.

Mahua Kothi – Taj Safaris sells items made by local tribal communities sourced with the help of NGO Last Wilderness Foundation and employs a Gond artist to showcase and sell his art.

Kipling Camp supports local Gond artists with materials and provides opportunities for them to show and sell their work to guests. Read case study.

Oberoi Vanyavilas organises a regular crafts mela at their premises providing local crafts NGO Dhonk with an outlet for selling its work. A regular platform is also given to local wildlife artists to display and sell their works and give guests an opportunity to try soot painting.

Banjaar Tola employs two local Gond artists and sells their work at the lodge. Gond art is displayed throughout the property.
HOSTING LOCAL PERFORMANCES

Aahana The Corbett Wilderness is amongst a range of lodges inviting local artists to perform at the lodge. Cultural nights are also organised to facilitate the exchange of ideas between villagers and guests.

Oberoi Vanyavilas invites local musicians to play the saarangi and sing local folk songs on a daily basis.

Barahi Jungle Lodge organises evening performances of Tharu dance, a centuries old art form expressing the significance of festivals, farmland and the seasons. They have also introduced day long nature walks up to Madi village in Chitwan National Park, a village without electricity. Guests can stay at WWF sponsored village home stays or return after an authentic Tharu lunch.

A local Baiga tribal cooperative formed with the help of Belinda Wright, owner of Kipling Camp, performs tribal dances for guests at the lodge. Lunches for guests at village homes are also arranged.

Aama Mohiniyattam, an indigenous art form of Kerala, is performed at Spice Village, Thekkady.

Red Earth Kabini is working with NGO Sambrana to help revive dying folk and tribal dance and music forms. Its building uses a traditional rammed earth technique. Read case study.

VILLAGE VISITS AND INSIGHTS INTO LOCAL LIFE

A range of lodges facilitate visits to local markets and villages to give their guests a feel of local life. Pictured here, guests from Kipling Camp exploring a nearby market, part of their broader range of activities to give an insight into local life and farming whilst contributing to local livelihoods.

Singinawa Jungle Lodge facilitates visits to the neighbouring village and interactions with local people to promote an understanding of local Baiga culture.

Guests at Evolve Back Kabini can visit a local village house for a fee, an income opportunity for the householder and cultural insight for guests.
LOCAL CUISINE

Svasara Jungle Lodge is documenting recipes from local villages and tribal hamlets and preparing them for guests from its organic farm and local suppliers. Read case study.

A village kitchen serves traditional cuisine at Forsyth Lodge, Satpura, a community enterprise run by women. The lodge is also helping to revive the art of macramé knotting. Photo credit: Vaibhav Mehta. Read case study in Local Economy section.

Guests at Spice Village Thekkady are offered an interactive cookery session every evening. The resort’s naturalists give an overview of spices and their history. Ingredients for the resort’s cuisine are sourced from within a 50-mile radius.

HERITAGE SITES

A range of lodges support the restoration of local temples and heritage sites. Pictured here support by Barahi Jungle Lodge for local temples and museums in Chitwan, part of its CSR programme.

Holipura has been declared a heritage village with support from Mela Kothi – The Chambal Safari Lodge’s Conservation Foundation and village tours by local residents catalysed to provide new livelihood opportunities. Read case study.

Mela Kothi’s Chambal Conservation Foundation has submitted a Heritage Management Plan to encourage sustainable development of nearby Bateshwar, a historic site. New enterprises have been catalysed to enhance guest experiences and local livelihoods.

The art of pottery is promoted by Woods at Sasan Gir, one of the oldest earning sources for the nearby local village. Classes are organised and products sold to help keep this tradition alive.
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Evolve Back Kabini, Nagarhole
Keeping Cultural Heritage Thriving – Policy into Practice

Evolve Back Kabini has a responsible tourism policy setting out to make a positive contribution to Kabini’s fragile natural and cultural heritage embracing diversity and instilling pride amongst the local community in their culture. The lodge’s buildings and guest huts are created in the style of the local Kadu Kuruba tribe and are built using local materials and labour. Annual thatching by locals distributes the removed chatai among the villagers.

Guests are sensitised to local customs, culture and the environment and made aware of regulations and good practice through information and briefings. The lodge’s exceptional Kabini Interpretation Centre includes a museum, lily pond, butterfly garden and a Kuruba hut to provide a deeper understanding of the region’s beautiful, environmentally and culturally fragile destination and the need to protect it. Daily eco tours of the lodge share their good practice with guests and how they are working to minimise their footprint.

The lodge provides a platform for local performers and artists to display their artistic heritage helping to revive and keep cultural traditions thriving. Local performances are the only evening entertainment provided.

Cookery classes are organised to familiarise guests with local cuisine made from local produce.

Village visits are arranged and guests can also visit a local village house for a fee, an opportunity for positive cultural exchange and insight into local life.
Kipling Camp, Kanha
Supporting Local Cultural Traditions and Livelihoods

Kipling Camp’s cultural activities are rooted in their philosophy of supporting local communities whilst at the same time giving their guests an insight into the vibrant culture of local Gond and Baiga tribes. A local Baiga tribal cooperative formed with the help of lodge owner Belinda Wright performs traditional dances for lodge guests and has helped to revive and keep local cultural traditions alive whilst supporting their livelihoods.

The lodge supports local Gond artists with materials and encourages them to come and show and sell their work to guests. Gond painting and other regional handicrafts are displayed throughout the lodge and are on sale in their shop. Demonstrations of their art technique are also arranged at the lodge.

Most recently over the summer of 2020, an online sale of this vibrant Gond tribal art was organised to provide much needed income to the artists during the Covid-19 lockdown. All proceeds go to the artists; no commission is taken.

Guests are provided with opportunities for guided visits to local markets and villages. The lodge also pays villagers to host lunches and teas at local homes. Interactions with local farmers are arranged to give an insight into traditional farming. Demonstrations of jaggery-making, a concentrated juice made from sugar cane, are also arranged.

Diwali is celebrated with traditional decorations at the lodge, pictured here, made by local schoolchildren.
Mahua Kothi - Taj Safaris, Bandhavgarh
Luxury Combined with Rustic Charm

Retaining the features of the heritage homestead in which it is based, Mahua Kothi – Taj Safaris has seamlessly blended luxury with rustic charm. Twelve traditional mud huts, or kutiyas, have been created for guest accommodation using traditional local materials and labour. Richly coloured local textiles in shades of rust and burnt orange complement the natural hand finished lime and earth washed walls and handmade pottery roof tiles. Local handicrafts and textiles adorn the reception, dining areas and a courtyard reflecting local culture.

Guests are treated to the aroma of local dishes prepared on a chulha, a stone and mud mixed stove, prepared in the traditional way complementing their broader culinary offer.

A local Gond artist is employed on a daily basis to showcase his art. A broader range of paintings, Bastar handicrafts, Baiga jewellery and other items made by local tribal communities sourced with the help of NGO Last Wilderness Foundation are on sale in the lodge’s shop.

Traditional flute music is played by a local musician on a daily basis. The lodge also showcases Baiga dance and music traditions.
Conservation of the cultural and natural heritage of the Chambal Valley lies at the heart of Mela Kothi – The Chambal Safari Lodge and its Foundation. Owners Ram Pratap Singh, a regional Convenor of INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage) and his wife, Anu, have lovingly restored their 19th century heritage property. Guest accommodation is built in the traditional style with local materials and furnished to reflect local culture.

Their conservation efforts have extended to the locality helping to put little known heritage sites onto the map bringing new livelihood opportunities to local communities. The local village of Holipura, with its exquisite havelis (grand houses), built by the prosperous Chaturvedi clan has been declared a heritage village with tours by local residents catalysed to unlock the village’s rich heritage and colourful past.

New tourism-related enterprises have also been catalysed in nearby Bateshwar, an ancient settlement with a multitude of architectural styles. The lodge’s foundation has developed a Heritage Management Plan aimed at helping to ensure the sustainable development, restoration and management of this historic site.
Paatlidun Safari Lodge, Corbett
Keeping Local Kumaoni Traditions Alive

A philosophy of keeping local traditions alive lies at the heart of Paatlidun Safari Lodge’s design and operations. Local craftsmen and labour have been used to construct a lodge which reflects local Kumaoni traditions using authentic, antique wooden frames and local tiles, mud, bricks and wood. Lodge walls have been finished with a local technique using raw eggs to give them a smooth finish and to enhance their natural cooling properties.

Buildings reflect local Kumaoni traditions using local materials and labour.

The cottages are beautifully designed with colourful Garhwali art on entrance doors. The planting of a tulsi (Ocimumtenuiflorum) at the main entrance of every cottage reflects local practice.

The reception area has been decorated with Kumaoni furniture, handicrafts and showpieces. Beautiful framed paintings and handicrafts are displayed throughout the property. A museum in the grounds houses antiques found across Corbett and in other part of Kumaon. A tea shop named Chahpani, serves Kumaoni snacks with different varieties of herbal teas. The lodge’s shop stocks local handicrafts sourced by NGOs SOS Care India, Umang, and Kilmora.

Antique windows are incorporated into the design.

Kumaoni furniture and handicrafts are used for interiors.

Guest cottages reflect local traditions and craftsmanship.

Local Kumaoni dance and music are performed regularly at the lodge.

Traditional Kumaoni snacks are served.

Guests are briefed about the surrounding area and local culture and can enjoy village visits and vibrant Kumaoni music and dance performances.
Red Earth Kabini, Nagarhole
Reviving Local Culture

Red Earth Kabini works with the NGO Sambrana to help revive dying folk and tribal dance and music forms within the Betta Kuruba communities and provide new livelihood opportunities for young people. The lodge provides a venue for village folk performances such as Pooja Kunitha, a dance form performed around Mandya and Bangalore worshipping the goddess Sakthi, and Kamsale, a form of traditional singing from the MM hills, Chamranjnagar and Mysore. Budding local classical musicians are also given a platform to perform. The proceeds are shared with the artists and a portion is paid to Sambrana to support their work.

The lodge’s commitment to reviving traditional performing arts complements the lodge architecture which is built using a traditional rammed earth technique. (See Sustainable Building profile case study).

Pooja Kunitha, a traditional devotional dance form.

Local classical musicians performing at the lodge.

Cottage built with traditional rammed earth technique and elephant grass.

Guests trying one of the local dances.

Island bar on one of the created waterbodies.
Singinawa Jungle Lodge, Kanha
Promoting Contemporary and Traditional Local Culture

Celebrating the rich culture of Gond and Baiga tribal communities and giving back to the people of Kanha lies at the heart of Singinawa’s operations. An existing building was transformed by the present owner, Mrs Tulika Kedia, working alongside curator Dr Alka Pande into a solar powered Kanha Museum of Life and Art. On display are the works of innumerable gifted local artists from a contemporary school of art which has emerged from the region’s ancient indigenous culture.

A vibrant programme of Baiga dance and songs is presented helping to keep ancient cultural traditions alive. For those wanting a further immersive cultural experience, the lodge plans day-long trips to an artisans’ village near the park enabling guests to try their hand at the colourful art of the Baiga and Gond tribes and to buy paintings and sculpture from the artists directly.

Colourful murals and Gond art adorn the walls of the lodge. Their shop stocks locally made handicrafts such as Gond paintings, Bastar artefacts, local pottery, Baiga jewellery and other handmade items. Local market visits are also encouraged to give an insight into local life.
Svasara Jungle Lodge, Tadoba
Safeguarding and Celebrating Local Culture and Cuisine

Svasara Jungle Lodge offers an immersive learning experience for guests not only in nature but also local culture. The in-room folder includes a briefing on local tribes and their art in addition to a biodiversity checklist, jungle etiquette and the lodge’s eco practices. The library includes a wide range of wildlife and cultural books. Art on display showcases local art forms – Gond, Madhubani and Bhil art in the dining room, Miirmira pottery in the Teakhouse, and Sujani embroidery in guest rooms – all profiled in briefing literature and on sale in their shop along with local bamboo handicrafts.

While regional recipes elsewhere are being lost, Svasara is documenting recipes from local villages and tribal hamlets and these form the core of their culinary experience for guests with produce sourced locally. Villagers are invited to the lodge on a weekly basis as part of the Vidharha Culinary Experience giving guests an opportunity to interact with them while the dishes are prepared. Dinner tables have a one-page description of the history and unique features of the cuisine served.

Visitors are encouraged to explore local villages on bicycles. Guided trips are also organised to local bamboo and pottery crafts centres and to local historical cultural sites such as the Markanda temples.
Tigergarh Wildlife Resort, Bandhavgarh
Local Culture, Training and Enterprise Combined

Tigergarh Wildlife Resort and its NGO CAT (Conservation, Art and Training) Foundation are helping to protect and celebrate the rural cultural traditions around Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve whilst opening up new opportunities for local livelihoods.

The resort is built using local materials and labour. Four of the eleven cottages are ‘rural rooms’ reflecting indigenous architecture. The courtyard adjacent is used for a host of workshops for guests and for CAT’s training programmes for local women to learn new crafts skills. Guests can enjoy demonstrations of pottery and Gond art by local artists with opportunities to purchase work and artists paid for their time.

Baiga and Gond folk dances traditionally performed during festivals and ceremonies are performed at the resort providing a further income opportunity for the local community. The costumes are procured by the resort.

An outdoor dining area where guests can learn about local dishes, reflects the local vernacular style. Its floor, walls and traditional motifs made from mud and cow-dung are replastered on a regular basis by three women from the local village Ranchha.

Local cultural references are displayed throughout the property from Gond paintings and masks made by the local Baiga tribe to the creative re-use of traditional local bamboo hats worn by villagers while farming as lampshades. Ceilings are made from bamboo woven by local artisans from the community living in the local village Tala.

Guided tours and personal interactions with local villagers are offered to give guests an insight into local life. Villagers receive a fee for home visits.

Insights into village life.
TOFTigers is a global business-to-business nature travel charity with a mission to improve the ecological and economic sustainability of wildlands and wildlife across Asia. Well-planned and well-managed responsible tourism is a force for good bringing economic benefits to rural areas, restoring habitat, supporting conservation and local communities, changing poachers into protectors and giving visitors inspiring experiences of nature. We work with the travel trade, destinations, accommodation providers, governmental and conservation organisations to make this happen through training, advocacy, certification, promoting best practice and partnership working.

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