

## Potential agroecotourism spots of Chitwan district



**Submitted To:**

**Dinesh Bhatta**

Department of Agri-botany and Conservation  
Faculty of Agriculture  
Agriculture and Forestry University  
Rampur, Chitwan

**Submitted By**

**Samikshya Khanal**

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Department of Entomology  
Agriculture and Forestry University  
Rampur, Chitwan

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Chitwan, situated at central part of Nepal, hosts people with diverse culture and customs. Extended from mahabharat hills to siwaliks, ecological zones vary along its breadth. One of the major attractions of Chitwan is “Chitwan National Park” which is large conserved area which is home for rare one horned rhinoceros and Bengal tiger.

People of different caste, religions and ethnicity have immigrated here from different parts of Nepal which has increased diversity of this place. However, “Tharu” people are indigenous people these plains where are chepang are indigenous to hills. They have their own culture, customs, dress, music, folklores, art and crafts. Their culture, art, cuisines are attractions for internal as well as international tourists.

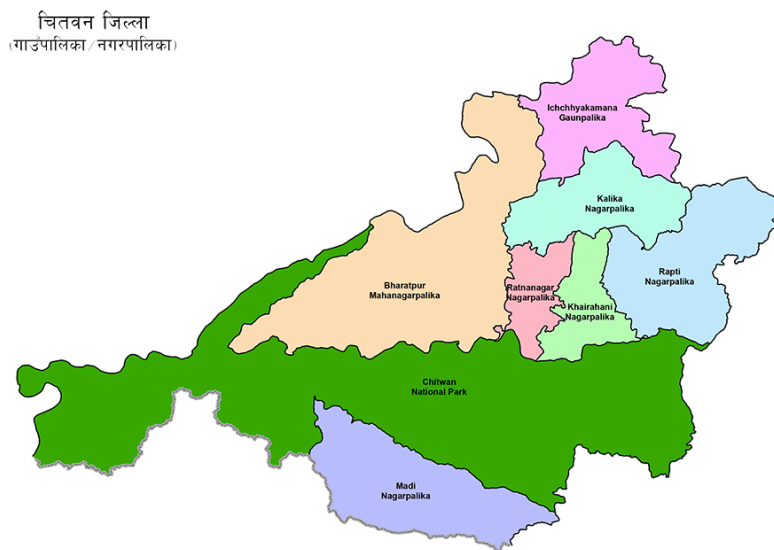


Figure 1: Map of chitwan showing political division

Besides “Chitwan National Park”, newly explored places like Upardang gadhi, Siraichuli, Madi are growing as next destinations in Chitwan. While agriculture has been major component of people’s economic and social life here in Chitwan, tourism is also an important aspect of economy in Chitwan. Especially in rural areas, people are involved in farming such as, citrus faming, apiculture, rice cultivation, fish farming etc. In this context, merging tourism with agriculture and ecology can be a great option for people here. In this practical I have explored some of the agroecotourism potential areas of Chitwan with their little description.

## 1. Madi-Someshwor gadhi

“Madi Valley” lies at far south of Chitwan and is surrounded on three sides by the Chitwan National Park and on the south by the Someshwar Gadhi Mountains. Major attraction of this place are; forests, lakes, monasteries, historical, religious sites, Tharu settlements and their culture, vegetable and fruit farming, fishing, silk farming etc.

There are four different villages with their own farming practice; Gardi village is famous for vegetables, especially zucchini farming, Baghauda village is famous for silk farming, Kalyanpur village is famous for fishing and silk farming, Ayodhyapuri village is famous for paddy and maize farming.



Figure 2: Madi village

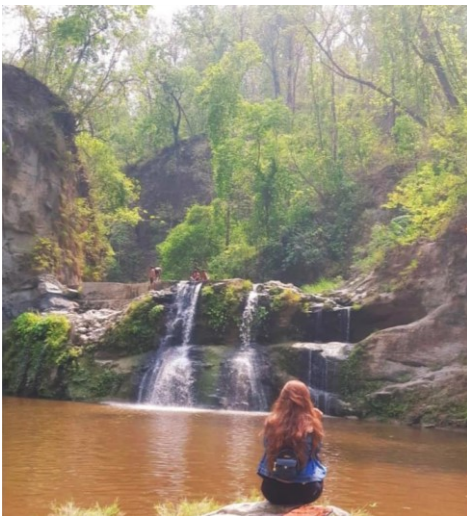


Figure 3: waterfall at madi

Surrounded by “Chitwan national Park” from three sides, visitors can enjoy watching large biological diversity of flora and fauna. They can have elephant rides or have jungle safari and watch wild animals such as; one horned rhinoceros, spotted deer, peacock, Bengal tiger, wild bore, rare bird spiny babbler etc.

Looking at its cultural and historical significance, it is said to be the first settled place by people in Chitwan. It was place where people from hilly region came to buy salt. It was also place where leaders of revolution travelled, conducted trainings during revolution of 2007 B.S to destroy Rana regime. Currently, people of diversified groups live here but major are tharu, darai and magar communities. They have diverse and rich cultures and traditions but live in perfect harmony with each other.



Figure 5: tourists learning farming



Figure 4: Valmiki ashram

Madi region is equally important for pilgrims. There are Goddhakdham, Pandavanagar village, Valmiki Ashram, Someshwargadhi, Gardi and Tharu village of Bagauda, Vaikunthe Lake, Chamere cave, Simara village of Rewapari, fishery of Gopalnagar, Laxminivas village etc. which carry religious significance to people of hindu community. Every year, people travel here for pilgrimage.

Someswar gadhi is another stravtion of this palce. Located at someshwar parbat on Nepal-India border, it is the place where king Mukunda sen established a fort to be protected from british. Also, it is named after hindu deity “Lord Shiva” and it is said that this place has been mentioned in different eras of hindu mythology. Besides, it is also a home for a lot of wild animals and birds. Here are list of activities that visitors can do:

- Visit to baikuntha jharna, gothak dham, valmiki ashram
- Learn about silkworm rearing, vegetable cultivation
- Hiking to someshwar hill
- Jungle Safari inside “Chitwan National Park”
- Homestay at tharu, Magar, Darai village

## 2. Mugling-Tamin-Darechowk:

This area is located at Ichhakamana VDC of Chitwan at a distance of a few kilometers from “Mugling”. One can stop at mugling and take hillside road from there to reach here. Just before hiking, tourists can visit “lamo jharna” at jalbire that offers refreshmenton lap of nature. Although it is near from highway, this place is untouched of city life. People are generally farmers and major attraction is Mandarins. Tourism



Figure 6: Mandarin collection center at Tamin



activities are very few here and only a few resorts are seen. Potential activities that can be done here are:

- Visit “lamo jharna” at jalbire
- Hiking from Mugling to Tamin
- Visit at Mandarin orchads
- Taste local cusines
- Homestay at traditional houses built of mud and stone
- Visit to Manakamana Temple
- Explore art and crafts of chepang and Magar communities
- Short trekking to upardanggadhi which is another tourist destination.



Figure 7: View from darechowk



Figure 8: Celebration of local festival by chepang



Figure 9: Making of silver ornament by local

### 3. Shaktikhor- Upardang gadhi:

It lies at kalika Municipality and has historical, cultural and natural importanc. Shaktikhor is also famous for hiking to a beautiful waterfall “sinti”. Upon ascending from shaktikhor we reach Upaardang gadhi which was headquarter of Chitwan until mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. Remnants of fort can still be seen on the gadhi. Located at height of 1275masl this place gives us mesmerizing view of mountains on north and plains on south below.



Figure 10: Sinti waterfall at shaktikhor

Talking about ethnic diversity, “Chepangs”, “Gurungs” and “Magars” are major inhabitants of this place who are preserving their rich culture. This place is famous for honey from churi tree “Indian Butter tree” and its oil. People practice agriculture, handicrafts, weaving for their livelihood. Although these places are growing as destination for internal tourists, their tourism potential is still untapped. Potential activities that can be done here are;

- Hiking to shaktikhor waterfall
- Swimming in shatktikhor waterfall
- Hiking to upardang gadhi
- Learn about communities like chebang who are really low in number
- Taste authentic “churi honey” which is collected from forests
- Buy handicrafts made by local people.



Figure 11: Terrace farming, upardang gadhi



Figure 12: Fort at upardang gadhi

#### 4. Siraichuli:

Siraichuli is the highest point of Chitwan district at height of 1975masl. It is a part of Mahabharat range and gives panaromic view of himalayan ranges of Gaurishankhar, Dhaulagiri, Langtang, Rolwaling, and Manaslu. It is famous for spectacular view of sunrise and sunset, huge diversity of birds, view of rhododendron. This place is inhabited by chebang people with rich culture. One of the major occupations of people here is agriculture and we can see view of terraces build on hills where people grow rice, buckwheat, millet, maize etc. and rear livestock such as



Figure 13: Beautiful Chebang Village



cattle and goats. We can reach siraichuli either by hiking from shaktikhor or from Hugdi village.

Activities that can be done:

- Bird watching
- Viewing mountain ranges
- Homestay at chepang households
- Watch chepang culture and traditions



Figure 14: Siraichuli

## 5. Meghauri-Golaghat:

Opposing to above destination it is a plain land located at western Chitwan. Meghauri is located around 30 kilometers from center of Chitwan "Bharatpur". "Meghauri" itself is a name of Tharu origin, and this place is inhabited by Tharu people who are tigers of Terai. This place is famous for an entertaining game "elephant polo". Further south from Meghauri we reach a beautiful place called "Golaghat". Golaghat is a beautiful village located at confluence of "Rapti" and "Narayani" river. Tourists can enjoy beautiful view of sunset from beach of Rapti and Narayani, rich culture of Tharu people, their special cuisines. Also, tourists have chance to visit Chitwan National Park and watch rich biodiversity of the national park. With respect to agriculture, people grow cereals like; rice, maize, different vegetables, fish farming etc. Things that can be done:



Figure 15: Elephant polo at Meghauri

- Visit to Chitwan National Park
- Watch elephant polo
- Canoeing
- Homestay at Tharu household
- Stay at luxurious hotels
- Watch Tharu cultural shows
- Taste Tharu dishes like; chichhad, ghongi, dhikri, bhakka, jhinjia machhri etc.



Figure 16: Fish farming



Figure 17: Sunset view from golaghat

## 6. Jagatpur- Bikram baba-Kasara

Located on eastern part of Chitwan inside “Chitwan national park”, Bikram Baba is a place of religious importance. A large number of internal tourists visit this place during month of chaitra. Kasara is also a part of CNP and has gharial breeding center. This is a place inhabited by tharu and darai people with rich culture and cuisines and their mainstay of economy is agriculture. If we can add up some of other components such as organic farm, home stay, cultural shows etc. to the existing source of attraction. It has potential to attract tourists from varied aspects such as; religious aspect, academic aspect, natural aspect and cultural aspect.



Figure 18: Bikram Baba Mela



Figure 19: Gharial breeding center at kasara



Figure 20: A view of Chitwan National Park



## 7. Sauraha-Kumroj-Kathar

Sauraha is one of the major tourist destinations of Chitwan and its major attraction is “Chitwan National Park”. Besides there are museums, elephant breeding centers, elephant bath, homestay, lodges, hiking, canoeing facilities available. People of sauraha are more dependent on tourism sector than agriculture. But in nearby villages such as kumroj and kathar, agriculture is major activity done by people. Kumroj and kathar were the villages where “Integrated pest management (IPM)” was practiced for the first time. Most of the people here are from tharu community. These villages have immense potentialities to attract internal as well as international tourists.



Figure 21: A tharu girl in traditional outfit



Figure 22: rural life at kumroj village



Figure 23: tharu museum at sauraha

## 8. Other places with potential

- Kankali- Chainpur
- Bijaynagar-sanoghadi
- Ramnagar-kabilas
- Padampur
- Jyotinagar

Having diversified culture and ethnic communities, beautiful places with mesmerizing beauty, diverse geography, huge bio diversity, medial hub of the nation, famous for good education facilities, accessibility of internet and communication facilities, yet close to nature and tradition, Chitwan is truly a potential region for agroecotourism.