

ANNUAL CONVENTION OF SAATO

Participated in a four days Annual Convention of Sikkim Association of Adventure Tour Operators (SAATO) at Norbhu Gyang Resort, Pelling West Sikkim, India from 13th – 16th January 2005.



Recommendations:

- For Bird Watching develop Mahananda Wildlife Reserve, Siliguri
- For Mt. Filghts develop Bagdogra, Siliguri & Bhadrapur or Biratanagar – Kanchenjunga Range in Eastern India.
- For Mt. Biking develop Ilam in Nepal – Darjeeling – Sikkim – Kalimpong – Kakarvitta.
- For Ultra Light Flights develop Inlam to Darjeeling
- Trans Himalayan Car Rally develop Gangtok – Sikkim to Pokhara, Nepal – Gangtok – Darjeeling – Pashupatinagar – Ilam – Pokhara, Nepal.
- For Trekking develop Ilam – Sandakpur – Rimbik – Kalimpong – Darjeeling.
- Culture / Adventure Tour:
- Develop Darjeeling – Sikkim – Ilam and surrounding – Pathibahra – Sandakpur and many other tours in Northeast India.
- Joint Colaboration between NTO of Nepal & India – Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council – Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation.
- Joint Marketing Strategy to showcase adventure products having competitive and comparative advantages (as in ADB – SASEC Project).





First annual convention of SAATO concluded

First annual convention of Sikkim Association of Adventure Tour Operators (SAATO) was held from 13-16 January 2005 in Sikkim, North East India. The SAATO convention was also attended by the Nepalese tourism experts to discuss and exchange knowledge over different agendas and to work towards bilateral tourism development between Nepal and Sikkim. Nepalese delegation included Ang Tshering Sherpa- President of Nepal Mountaineering Association, President Deepak Mahat and Executive Members of Trekking Agents Association of Nepal, Executive Members of Nepalese Agents of Travel and Tour Association, Megh Ale-President of Nepal River Conservation Trust, P. T. Sherpa- President of Kathmandu Environmental Education Project, Bijay Pradhan- Executive Chairman of Dream Nepal Travel and Tours Pvt. Ltd and Pramita Pradhan- Director of Discover Nepal Sikkim Association of Adventure Tour Operators. Tourism Minister of Sikkim was the Chief Guest for the convention. There were also delegates from Bhutan and India.



During the visit Nepalese speakers recommended a tie-up based on Buddhism forming a Buddhist circuit between Nepal and Sikkim. Regarding the same, Bijay Pradhan, Executive Chairman of Dream Nepal Tours and Travels made a presentation on the possible activities of Bird Watching, Mountain Biking, Ultra light Flights and Trans Himalayan Car Rally which could be added in Sikkim package. He has also suggested to develop a trekking route linking Illam-Sandakpur-Rimbik-Kalimpong-Darjeeling and Darjeeling-Sikkim-Ilam and surrounding-Pathibhara-Sandakpur and Northeast of India. "Due to linguistic and cultural similarities tour operators from Nepal and Sikkim can work together to develop package tours to Sikkim and vice versa. Sikkim is a place having tourism potential and this trend is slowly gaining recognition. The convention was entirely focused on learning ideas to develop adventure sports activities in Sikkim for which we were pledged for ideological support by SAATO," informs Bijay Pradhan. Complying the same, Deepak Mahat said, "Sikkim is blessed with good topography and weather, which will further support it to become an ideal tourist destination. Trekking to Kanchenjunga Base Camp can be made successfully. Because Nepal has sufficient experience on adventure sports and activities such as Mountaineering and trekking, SAATO has kept special interest in learning expertise from Nepalese entrepreneurs and the convention was focused highly on it." He further added, "Due to developed infrastructure, possibility of selling tour packages can be made straight from Bhadrapur, comprising Darjeeling as well as Sikkim. Nepal can extend friendly and bilateral tourism promotion policies but there should be a limitation to it. We should be aware that our destinations would not be overshadowed." SAATO has been founded with the sole motto to develop Sikkim as a potential tourism destination and develop professionalism in the sector of Adventure tourism in Sikkim. It has completed a year of its establishment and is moving ahead with clear visions and missions to make Sikkim a premium Adventure tourist destination. The realization of Sikkim Tourism for the need of specially trained and devoted tour operators gave birth to SAATO, a union for tourism professionals to work together to achieve a common goal.

(Photo Courtesy: Dream Nepa Tours & Travels)