

CALL OF THE WILD

JALPAIGURI is the greenest district of Bengal with lush forests covering about 27 per cent of its total area, way above the national average of 19.4 per cent and state average of 15.18 per cent. Its several wildlife sanctuaries and reserve forests are a treat for the environment enthusiast. Chapramari is one of the oldest reserve forests in India, and ideal for those interested in flora and fauna. It is the perfect destination for those who seek respite from a cacophonous city existence.

It was way back in 1895-96 when an official of British Government named D H E Sander first surveyed the area, officially endorsing its potential. By the end of 1879 this place came under protection and in 1895 it was declared a national reserve forest under the provision of Indian Forest Act 1878. However, the name Chapramari Wildlife Reserve was coined only in 1939 and in 1998 it became a wildlife sanctuary.



Chapramari is the perfect destination for those who seek respite from a cacophonous city existence, writes somen sengupta



which endow an enchanted ambience to the place.

The railway track that connects Siliguri and Malbazar crosses the road in between. A major concern is the accidental death of elephants by speeding trains that run inside

the jungle. Post the fatal accident in 2010, which resulted in the death of seven elephants, the Indian Railways has instructed its drivers to limit their speed to 40 km/hour while crossing this part. There are signs at every corner to demarcate the elephant corridor.

Facing a group of elephant inside the jungle may be lethal. So be careful. It is imperative that you follow the instructions of your local guide and driver. Albeit few in number, the forests are also home to the famous Royal Bengal Tiger. The main entry gate of the forest bears the name.



pigeon are the most common in sight. So do not forget your notebook and camera if you love birds.

Travel logistics

Forest is located off National Highway 31.

Nearest railway station is Malbazar, which has direct trains from Calcutta and Siliguri.

It takes around two hours by road from Siliguri.

If booking is not available at WBFDC tourist lodge, you can stay at Malbazar or Chalsa. Malbazar has an excellent tourist lodge while Chalsa has a high-end resort. Entry permits, guide and vehicle cost are separate. This is issued from Nature Interpretation Centre of Lataguri.

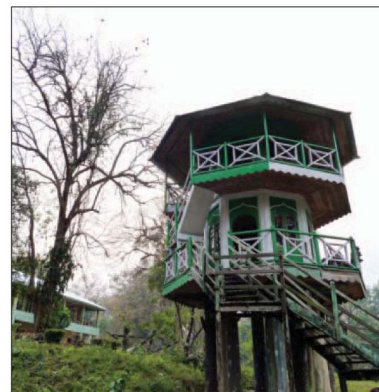
The forest is closed to tourists for 4 months (from July to September) during monsoons.

Food option is limited in the tourist lodge.

Chapramari is close to the Gorumara national park. Chapramari is about 30 km from Chalsa and Lataguri.

Booking of West Bengal Govt forest lodge can be done from Kolkata.

For more details visit www.wbfdc.com.



The area is well protected by electrical wires.

A jeep and guide can be hired

YOUR EXPERIENCE

What would be the place you recommend people must see before they die? Or how about your worst holiday experience? E-mail your travel piece and photographs to travel@thestatesman.net. The suggested length is 750 words. We will not consider articles that have already been published in print or online. *The Statesman* is not able to return submissions. Payment for travel articles is left to the discretion of the Editor.

The picturesque forest is nestled between three pristine rivers of north Bengal *Teesta*, *Neora* and *Murti*. Located on the foothills of the Dooar Range, Chapramari is manned by the River Murti on its western boundary. The total green coverage of the forest is 960.31 hectares. The forest is adjacent to two other green belts, the Garumara reserve forest and Lataguri.

The name Chapramari is derived from two local words "*Chapra*", a small kind of fish and "*mari*" which means abundance.

Chapramari is famous for its elephant population and you may encounter some on the road itself. Needless to say they are not always very kind to invaders. Chapramari forest comes under the famous elephant corridor of Bengal.

Each year about 300 elephants move eastward from Bengal towards Assam. The group crosses the dense forest of Chapramari. The metal road that runs inside the forest bypasses a large and dark army of saal trees,